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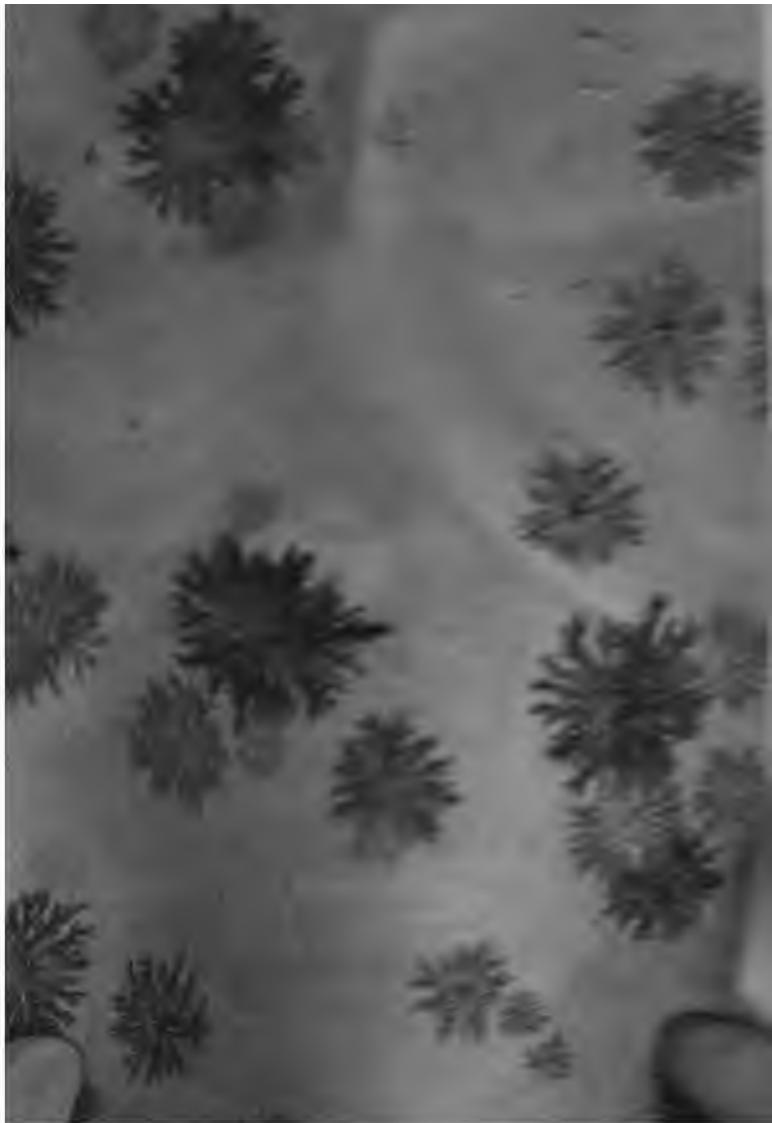
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ATALANTA IN CALYDON:  
AND  
LYRICAL POEMS

BY  
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

SELECTED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION,  
BY  
WILLIAM SHARP.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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### ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

Forty years ago the keener-sighted among the critics of the day recognised that a new poet had sounded a fresh if admittedly an unequal note in the music of English verse. To-day *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamund* are little read; partly, no doubt, because of the rarity of the slim volume which has so long been out of print. But within five years of its publication a common recognition agreed that English Poetry was enriched by a new and potent genius; a poet for whom one of the highest contemporary places was certain, and who might well prove to be of the few who do not pass with their period and vogue but are for time and literature. For in 1865 *Atalanta in Calydon* was published.

More than thirty-five years have passed since the appearance of this lyrical drama. It is a period wherein the mature genius of Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Rossetti, William Morris, gave royalty to our literature: wherein the brilliant later Victorian poetry flowered in unequalled fertility. Nothing of all this accomplishment better stands the test of time, change, and comparative criticism than Mr. Swinburne's early masterpiece.

"New things, and never this best thing again;  
Seasons and song, but no song more like mine."

That this masterpiece should be the work of youth, of a writer in his "twenties", is a surprise to which we can never become accustomed.

Few of our great writers, either in prose or verse, have been born in London. Two notable instances, however, are those of Robert Browning and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

But whereas Browning was in all respects a Londoner and the child of Londoners, it was a mere chance that the younger poet was not born in the North Country, in the Northumberland of his people. In that North-Sea province the Swinburnes are an old-established family: even so far back as the time of Henry III. one Sir William de Swinburne was a Northumbrian to be reckoned with. The name is probably one of the oldest of Northumbrian clan-names: unquestionably the Swinburnes of Swinburne belonged to the native noblesse. In the time of Edward II. the direct line ended with Adam de Swinburne: and after a lapse we hear of his kinsman, Sir William, but of Swinburne Castle no more. The family seat is now, as it has so long been, Capheaton Castle: there the present head of the family, Sir John Swinburne, resides: and there and in the neighbourhood, his cousin, Algernon Charles Swinburne, spent much of his boyhood.

The poet's father, the late Admiral Charles Swinburne, was the second son of Sir John Edward Swinburne: he married Lady Henrietta Jane, daughter of the third Earl of Ashburnham: and their eldest child, born in London on the 5th of April 1837, is the subject of the present memoir. As the Ashburnham family is also of pre-Conquest days, Mr. Swinburne may certainly claim to be of the oldest blood in the country.

Of the boyhood and early youth of Mr. Swinburne little is known, except to a limited circle of friends. Much of it was spent in an intimate, at times an impassioned communion with nature, and in particular the sensitive and imaginative boy was early subject to the spell of the wind and the sea, the two elemental forces which are echoed, reflected, and interpreted throughout his poetry. Above all other poets of our country, or of any country, Swinburne is the poet of the sea. The sound and colour of the moving wave live in almost every poem he has given us . . . .

“The sea, that harbours in her heart sublime  
The supreme heart of music deep as time,  
And in her spirit strong  
The spirit of all imaginable song.” \*

In his earliest prose writing—his impassioned rejoinder to the hostile outcry against *Poems and Ballads*—Mr. Swinburne

---

\* Loch Torridon. (*Astrophel*).

alludes to Sappho's poetic fragments as "akin to fire and air, being themselves 'all air and fire': other element there is none in them." Of his own work, it might well be said that the sound and beauty of the sea, the voice and prophesying of the wind, are the elemental and dominant forces.

And since allusion to his prose writings has been made, let me give here a passage from the *Essay on Wordsworth and Byron (Miscellanies)* which might be written of his own achievement in poetry:—

"The test of the highest poetry is that it eludes all tests. Poetry in which there is no element at once perceptible and indefinable by any reader or hearer of any poetic instinct may have every other good quality . . . it is not poetry—above all, it is not lyric poetry—of the first water. There must be something in the mere progress and resonance of the words, some secret in the very motion and cadence of the lines, inexplicable by the most sympathetic acuteness of criticism. Analysis may be able to explain how the colours of this flower of poetry are created and combined, but never by what process its odour is produced."

For the poet — for every artist, but perhaps for the poet above all — there is no period so important, no education so vital and enduring, as the period between the merging of childhood into boyhood and the merging of boyhood into manhood, as the education learned at first hand, in idle freedom, under the tutelage of the wind and the sun. In this early wisdom, the boy-poet (for he began to compose verse while yet a child) learned deeply, and, as his work shows, unforgettable. Possibly too it was during the long pony-rides of his boyhood in Northumberland that the young Swinburne first came to dwell upon the contrast between the character and fate of Queen Elizabeth of England and the character and fate of Queen Mary of Scotland: for in the little village of Cambo, at the top of the mile-long ascent from Wallington, the inn of the Two Queens had a swinging sign-board on whose south side was depicted the face of Elizabeth and on whose north "the proud eyes" of the Queen o' Scots.

More, too, than from any tutor or "schooling" he learned from his mother much that was to influence him, and notably his love of Italy, its language, literature, and history. Shelley, Keats, Byron, Landor, Browning, Swinburne, each differing in

so much, have shown themselves at one in a common love; but none save the sixth knew and loved Italy and the Italian genius in boyhood. Lady Henrietta Ashburnham had been educated in Florence, and then and later spent much of her life there, and her love was doubtless the torch that lit the flame in her son's mind which reached to so great a height in *Songs Before Sunrise* and the *Songs of Two Nations*.

To William Bell Scott, had he been as capable with the brush and etching-needle as with the pen, every lover of our literature would be indebted: for it is to him we owe the earliest but unfortunately grotesquely exaggerated portrait of Swinburne as a young man, i.e. in 1860, when he was twenty-two, and had just published his first book. Of this portrait Scott writes in his *Notes*:

"In 1860, when his first drama was published, I painted a small portrait of him in oil, (afterwards etched). He used to come in and live with us in Newcastle, and when I was out or engaged he was to be seen lying before the fire with a mass of books surrounding him like the ruins of a fortification, all of which he had read, and could quote or criticise correctly and acutely many years after. This portrait (of himself) used to arrest him long afterwards, when he visited me, as if it was new to him. He was delighted to find it had some resemblance to what he called his portrait in the National Gallery. This was the head of Galeazzo Malatesta in the picture of the Battle of Sant' Egidio by Uccello, which certainly was not merely the same type, but was at this time exceedingly like him."

A good portrait of the poet, and at the same time a beautiful painting, is the "head" by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, painted in the early sixties. Here, with some allowance for Rossetti's very individual vision and method, is the best early likeness we have of the author of *Atalanta in Calydon*, after the remarkable portrait made about this time by G. F. Watts. It should be added that another excellent early likeness is in the stooping head of a picture by Rossetti now in the possession of Mr. Watts-Dunton. There is also a "hinted" portrait in Rossetti's well-known drawing of Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee.

From Eton Algernon Charles Swinburne went to Oxford. There is no published record of his career at Balliol. Rumour says that he was diligent in all intellectual efforts save those conventionally required of him: a variation adds that despite

his familiarity with Greek and Latin he was "ploughed" because he failed in "Scripture": at anyrate he departed from Oxford without taking his degree. He left the University, however, with the knowledge that he had powers beyond those of other men, and that he had it in him to become a great poet: and he left it rich in the promise of life, for he had already made the intimate acquaintance of three men who were to be lifelong friends as well as rivals in genius, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (who was then painting the frescoes on the walls of the "Union"), William Morris, and Edward Burne-Jones.

The influence of these friendships is unmistakable in the early work of Algernon Swinburne. It would have been impossible for any imaginative and responsive nature not to be influenced by Rossetti, and it is to Rossetti above all others that the younger poet owed that turning towards essential romance in life and art which gave so rich a glow to the *Poems and Ballads*. In another phase of poetic thought and artistry, Morris exercised only a lesser, if perhaps a more immediate and obvious influence. It is as evident in *Poems and Ballads*, as that of Browning is in *Rosamund*. Something of the young poet's indebtedness to the young painter Burne Jones may be inferred from the circumstance of the dedication of the more famous volume, in stanzas not only of great beauty but of singular aptness . . .

In a land of clear colours and stories,  
In a region of shadowless hours,  
Where earth has a garment of glories,  
And a murmur of musical flowers;  
In woods where the spring half uncovers  
The flush of her amorous face,  
By the waters that listen for lovers,  
For these is there place?

\*      \*      \*      \*      \*  
Though the world of your hands be more gracious  
And lovelier in lordship of things  
Clothed round by sweet art with the spacious  
Warm heaven of her imminent wings,  
Let them enter unfledged and nigh fainting  
For the love of old loves and lost times;  
And receive in your palace of painting  
This revel of rhymes.

From Oxford Algernon Swinburne went for a brief while to London, and then passed some time at his father's beautiful place in the Isle of Wight, East Dene near Bonchurch, on the seaward slope of St. Boniface Down. In Bonchurch graveyard are the graves of the poet's father and mother: but for other reasons also East Dene and its lovely neighbourhood are sacred to Mr. Swinburne. Between Bonchurch and the Western side of Ventnor is one of the loveliest coast-tracts in England, and here the young poet spent many of his happiest days. A relative by marriage, Sir Henry Gordon (who had married Mr. Swinburne's aunt, Lady Mary Ashburnham) had a beautiful house and grounds on the Undercliff between St. Catherine's Point and Blackgang Chine: and here, and at East Dene, by the pine-shadowed rocky slopes and grassy hollows of that sunny, sea-washed region, many of the poems long so familiar to us were written. One of these, in flawless music, "The Forsaken Garden," was inspired by and written near Old Bonchurch.

In the same year that he left Oxford Swinburne went abroad, to the Italy he already loved so well: and here he made a new memorable friendship. After Victor Hugo no contemporary had more of his reverence and admiration than Walter Savage Landor. His visit to the old poet at his villa on Fiesole was for the younger one of the chief events at the outset of his literary career: nor did he ever waver in the allegiance so signally expressed in the dedication of the first mature work of his genius, *Atalanta in Calydon*. To this visit we owe the fine quatrains which will be found in this volume, with their significant lines, "the youngest to the oldest singer, that England bore."

On his return to London Swinburne took his place as one of the most significant and fascinating personalities in what was by far the most interesting and original literary group then leagued by common sympathies and ideals. At Oxford his two chief friends had been Burne Jones and John Nichol: but now he saw little of the painter who was afterwards to become so famous, and Nichol had returned to Scotland, shortly to become the youngest University professor in the North. This remarkable man never fulfilled the rare promise of his Oxford days: for though he attained eminence both as a poet and critic, and as Professor of Literature at Glasgow had

from the first session of his long career a notable influence, he lacked just the something that differentiates the most brilliant intellect from the creative imagination. But at Oxford it was commonly believed that of the younger generation of that day no one was more likely to achieve fame than the brilliant young Scot, with his fiery "Berserker" nature and his natural impulse of leadership. It was he who founded and edited a college magazine, *Undergraduate Papers*, now so extremely rare that only a few copies are known to exist. Its literary value, however, has been grotesquely overrated. It is, of course, interesting to note that so early as in 1857 the future author of *Tristram of Lyonesse* was occupied, as a theme for his imagination, with the story of Queen Iseult: but in the twenty-five tercets which appeared under John Nichol's editorship there are at most only some half-dozen lines which reveal the poet, and these might as well have been written by Nichol or any other of the young men who at that time were under the spell of the newcomers, Rossetti and Morris. Nor is more than a passing notice called for of Swinburne's first piece of imaginative prose—the short tale called "Dead Love" which with a charming illustration by Lawless appeared in *Once-A-Week* in October 1862. This piece of quaint mediævalism in the manner of William Morris's short stories of Arthurian Chivalry was afterwards reprinted in London in 1864, but is now so rare that only three copies of the original edition are known to exist.

But all this, with other minor "*Undergraduate*" contributions, amounted to no more than the "cacoëthes scribendi" of the ordinary literature-loving undergraduate. What is of interest is that before Swinburne left Oxford he had already begun to write verse with beauty, distinction, and the first unmistakable notes of a music that he has made his own. "The Queen Mother" and "Rosamund" are youthful productions, but in *Chastelard* we have the evidence of a genius as unique as potent. Mr. Swinburne has himself put on record (in his Notes on the character of Queen Mary) that he wrote *Chastelard* in the last year of his life as an undergraduate.

On his return from Italy, full of enthusiasm for Landor and more than ever captivated by the spirit of freedom animating his heroes Mazzini, Aurelio Saffi, and Victor Hugo, Swinburne settled in London. For a time he shared with Rossetti and

George Meredith a house overlooking the Thames: though of one co-tenant he saw very little, for Mr. Meredith was seldom at Chatham House, and as for the other, his own habits and those of Rossetti differed so much that the two friends, though much in sympathy, had little actual communion. It was at this time that Rossetti painted the beautiful portrait to which allusion has already been made: and in the face of the young poet as delineated by his friend and compeer it is impossible to ignore the look of an exceptional individuality and of conscious power. When this brief copartnery ended, the youngest of the three friends occupied rooms elsewhere in London; in North Crescent, Great James Street for a considerable time, and later in Guildford Street; varying residence in town with occasional visits to Holmwood, near Reading (whither the family home, after the death of his father, had been moved), or to the East Coast, or to the shores of Normandy—where once (at Etretat) he had a narrow escape from drowning, having in one of his adventurous swims been caught in a dangerous current and saved by some fishermen when almost at the last gasp—an event recorded in the poem entitled “*Ex Voto*”.

Through Burne Jones the young poet made another friendship, with G. F. Watts, afterwards to become so famous as a painter and then already accepted as a master: and to this we owe the best-known (and by some friends considered the most like) of all portraits of Swinburne.

After the publication of *Bothwell* in 1874 and of *Erechtheus* in 1876 the poet's health gave way under the stress of his too strenuous life, and shortly after the publication of the second series of *Poems and Ballads* (1878) he decided to leave London and settle in some quiet region within reach of and yet sufficiently remote from the metropolis. Too shaken in health to undertake this alone, he was accompanied by his devoted friend, Mr. Theodore Watts, already the foremost literary critic of his day (Rossetti's “friend of friends”—to introduce here, with adequate excuse I hope, the poet-painter's generous phrase concerning the man to whom of all others he certainly had most reason to be indebted), and in due time, under his later-assumed surname of Watts-Dunton, to become so well-known as the author of the romance of *Aylwin* and as the poet of *The Coming of Love*. Mr. Watts fixed upon a house, with a long garden, called “The Pines”, on Putney Hill near

Wimbledon Common: and there, for the last twenty-two years, the two friends, each with a name so high in contemporary letters, have contentedly lived.

When Swinburne left Oxford all his friends knew that to no ordinary ambition he united powers of a kind which were to justify the faith of men like Rossetti and Morris. It was not till 1860, when he was in his twenty-third year, however, that he published his first book, comprising the two dramas, "The Queen Mother" and "Rosamund". The book has long been out of print, and the author has never cared to reissue it. In both dramas there are continuous pages of fine rhetoric and many passages of time poetry, but there is also much of immaturity both in conception and execution. The book deserved cordial recognition, for it was unquestionably remarkable as the work of so young a man.

The Queen-Mother of the first play is Catherine 'de' Medici, and the scene of the tragedy is in Paris at the period of the Massacre of the Innocents. Possibly it was during his study of the history and personages of this time that the author became fascinated by the character and tragic fate of Mary Stuart: though as the idea of a play on the fate of Chastelard had occurred to him in early youth it is as probable that the drama of the "Queen-Mother" was a later outgrowth. As it stands, "The Queen-Mother" is almost of the nature of a prelude to the great dramatic cycle of Mary Stuart to which Mr. Swinburne gave the best years of his early and middle manhood.

*The Queen-Mother* and *Rosamund* was "affectionately inscribed to Dante Gabriel Rossetti". I remember Rossetti's telling me what pleasure he had in this first book of his friend, and how George Meredith said to him impatiently "Wait till he mounts his own horse, and then you'll see how he'll ride—further than any of us foresees, I'll be bound."

Swinburne had already begun to feel dissatisfied with "falling into line" with Morris and Rossetti, and at no time was discipleship to Tennyson or Browning possible for him. A new departure, and in more directions than one, was silently being prepared, but it was not till 1865, when he was twenty-seven, that he published *Atalanta in Calydon* and at once took his place as one of the foremost poets of the Victorian age. But meanwhile he had also written, or in these

intervening years wrote, some of the shorter poems which were afterwards to become so famous when issued in *Poems and Ballads*. Rossetti, Morris, Burne Jones and others had copies of several, and the rumour of their magical music got about, and the small English public that is curious about new beautiful things in the art of words began to speak of "this young poet Swinburne". Two of these pieces, for instance, "Laus Veneris" and the "Hymn to Proserpine", were certainly written not later than 1862, for W. Bell Scott has given in a few vivid lines a picture of the author in connection with these poems. About Christmas in 1862, he writes, he and his wife and a friend were going "to the wild sea-coast at Tynemouth", from Wallington, for a holiday, and were just about to start when "A. C. S. suddenly appeared, having posted from Morpeth early that morning." So the friends went to the then unfrequented Tynemouth sea-coast, and it was on the long dunes and sands by the sea that the young poet recited in his peculiar, chanting voice the sonorous "Hymn to Proserpine" and the not less musical quatrains of the "Laus Veneris"—"with the breaking waves running the whole length of the long, level sands towards Cullercoats, and sounding like far-off acclamations."

So though no book succeeded the first volume of 1860 until the appearance of "Atalanta" in 1865, the poet had been at work upon three books which were to take a permanent place in English literature—*Atalanta in Calydon*, *Chastelard*, and *Poems and Ballads*.

Besides the short tale, "Dead Love", Swinburne published in 1864, but not under his name nor in a book for which he was responsible, a very strange poem or dramatic allegory, "The Pilgrimage of Pleasure". This was contributed to the fifth chapter of a friend's romance entitled *The Children of the Chapel* (where, also, are other fragmentary pieces by the same pen), but it has never been reprinted by the author. From reperusal of the copy before me I imagine "The Pilgrimage of Pleasure" to have been inspired by Calderon's *Los Encantos de la Culpa*, or Fitzgerald's translation of it, but it might quite well be that the English poet had at that time never read Calderon either in the original or in translation. The *personæ* are Pleasure, Youth, Life, Discretion, Gluttony, Vain Delight, Sapience and Death: and the metrical narrative

is correspondingly strange and unexpected. The style for the most part is archaic, the metrical invention peculiar and effective. "Gluttony" has a Rabelaisian exuberance which is enhanced by his gloating delight in old savoury names of 'delicates and delights'. But as there is space for brief quotation only, the following will give some idea of the movement of this all but unknown poem of the master whose every collected line is familiar to his admirers.

## YOUTH.

    Away from me, thou Sapience, thou noddy, thou green fool!  
 What ween ye I be as a little child in school?  
 Ye are as an old crone that mooneth by a fire,  
 A bob with a chestnut is all thine heart's desire.  
 I am in mine habit like to Bacchus the high god,  
 I reck not a rush of thy rede nor of thy rod.

## LIFE.

    Bethink thee, good Youth, and take Sapience to thy wife,  
 For but a little while hath a man delight of Life.  
 I am as a flame that lighteth thee one hour;  
 She hath fruit enow, I have but a fleeting flower.

\* \* \* \*

## YOUTH.

    My sweet life and lady, my love and mine heart's lief,  
 One kiss of your fair sweet mouth it slayeth all men's grief,  
 One sight of your goodly eyes it bringeth all men ease.

## GLUTTONY.

    Ow, I would I had a manchet or a piece of cheese!

## VAIN DELIGHT.

    Lo, where lurketh a lurdan that is kinsman of mine;  
 Ho, Gluttony, I wis ye are drunken without wine.

## YOUTH.

    We have gone by many lands, and many glorious ways,  
 And yet have we not found this Pleasure all these days.  
 Sometimes a lightening all about her have we seen,  
 A glittering of her garments among the fieldes green;  
 Sometimes the waving of her hair that is right sweet,  
 A lifting of her eyelids, or a shining of her feet,

Or either in sleeping or in walking have we heard  
A rustling of raiment or a whispering of a word,  
Or a noise of pleasant water running over a waste place,  
Yet have I not beheld her, nor known her very face."

When in 1865 Swinburne published *Atalanta in Calydon* he passed at once, as already said, to the front rank of living poets. In this superb achievement he revealed a mastery of metre unequalled since Shelley and Coleridge, and with a wider and surer range and more sustained power than shown even by the greatest of our lyrical poets. Dedicated to Landor, in lines of pure and beautiful Greek, the whole volume has that harmonious completeness which is part of its high destiny. It had a welcome which few works of enduring value receive at first, and though naturally the "general reading public" did not care one way or the other, and but for the insistent talk and discussion concerning the new writer would have ignored the new masterpiece as it would ignore all other beautiful work if left to its own instinct, there were sufficient readers to give the book even from the publisher's standpoint an extraordinary success. No doubt this was in no small degree brought about by the emphatic and splendid eulogy of so influential a critic as Monckton Milnes, whose prompt article on "Atalanta" in the *Edinburgh Review* had an effect at once far-reaching and immediate.

When the *Prometheus Unbound* was given to English literature it was realised by the few who then understood the new wealth of beauty, that the language had been proved a more wonderful instrument than even its masters had foreseen. Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge gave it that elasticity and grace which Tennyson carried to ultra-refinement and Swinburne to unequalled metrical variety and beauty. But "Atalanta" stands as unique as does the "Prometheus." There is no music like it in English poetry. In variety of metrical invention it is unsurpassed in any language, and yet there is no sense of experimental effort, no sense of incongruity or strain, no sense of the fortuitous or hap-hazard. The music is as inevitable and natural as the song of thrush or nightingale, and if as incalculable as the wind, owes not less than the wind to an imperative law. There is not a page of "Atalanta" that could be wished away. The blank verse is a

triumph in a language which had known the magic use of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Milton and Shelley. The lyrical measures are like nothing that preceded them in English, and have never been approached by any later writer. Perfect beauty in part is revealed as perfect beauty in the whole. In all that makes great poetry *Atalanta in Calydon* stands as perhaps the supreme instance in modern literature.

It is, however, a mistake to say, as is often said, that this noble drama is a modern example of the Greek genius. *Atalanta in Calydon* is not a Greek drama, but a drama on a Greek theme by an English poet, inspired by love and knowledge of the Sophoclean drama. Even in *Erechtheus*, which more closely follows the Sophoclean model, Swinburne is not a Greek, but an English poet inspired by the Greek ideal and Greek beauty. Throughout all his work, from *Rosamund* to *Locrine*, from *Chastelard* to the *Tale of Balen*, he reveals himself to be as essentially English as Shakespeare or Milton. Many of his contemporaries have written on Greek themes in the Greek manner—as understood, or as feasible now, and in English—but with the possible exception of the one rare achievement of Leicester Warren (the late Lord De Tabley) not one has even approached the Greek originals upon which they have been modelled. Doubtless Walter Savage Landor was the last who could have achieved the all but impossible. Keats, for all his sunny paganism, was not a Greek: perhaps just because of this—for no stranger misconception exists than the idea that “sunny paganism” stands for the Greek mind. The Greek genius was the sanest the world has known; and sanity includes joyousness and “sunny paganism;” but it also includes the piercing vision which will not be baffled and the austere sadness which is the inevitable colour of thought. There is indeed much “paganism” in *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Poems and Ballads*, but it can hardly be called “sunny.” The beautiful lines entitled “A Lamentation,” given in this volume, more truly represent the spirit of sad world-wisdom and bitter weariness which animate Mr. Swinburne’s earlier work than the anything but sunny however debonair “revel of rhymes” on Faustine and Fragoletta, on Felise and Dolores.

The tragic beauty of the legend of Althaea and her son Meleager, of the scourge sent by Artemis and of the heroism

of Atalanta, the hunting of the terrible boar of Calydon, and the untoward slaying of Toxeus and Plexippus by Meleager with the swift-following doom involved—all this is lifted from the vague beauty of dimly outlined legend into the actual beauty of rounded and complete, of harmonious and consummate art. Although *Erechtheus* was not written till ten years later (and published in 1876) it must always be considered along with *Atalanta*. Here we have the mature intellectual expression of that Hellenic enchantment of which the earlier drama was the mature rhythmic expression. To superb diction the poet unites an almost terrible force and passion. Here, too, the Choruses are magnificent, from that famous one which begins

“Who shall put a bridle in the mourner’s lips to chasten them”

to the matchless Oreithyia chorus beginning

“Out of the north wind grief came forth,  
And the shining of a sword out of the sea.”

And yet *Erechtheus* has never had, perhaps never can have, either the spell over the love or the spell over the imagination exercised by its predecessor. Doubtless this is because of its remoteness from ordinary human emotion. The drama might have been written by an abstract intelligence, uninfluenced by ordinary human claims and needs. Presumably the poet did not realise this, since he dedicated the tragedy to his mother: and it is more than probable that he ranks it higher, and considers it with more pleasure even, than *Atalanta*. The music is so gravely noble, the construction and technical excellence so unsurpassable in kind, the poetry so alive with the flame of genius, that, for a few, *Erechtheus* will always have a place apart, an achievement on the remote heights of literature. But, for most readers, it is too surcharged with the terror of the irretrievable and the relentless, too given over to the cold, unappeasable pitilessness of the divine powers who do the will of fate: in it rises too loudly and insistently “the confluent surge of loud calamities” of which Erechtheus speaks in that wonderful opening declamation whose dominant note is

“And what they will is more than our desire,  
 And their desire is more than what we will.  
 For no man’s will and no desire of man’s  
 Shall stand as doth a god’s will . . . .

I do not think it is too much to say that since Sophocles no such fate-surcharged dramatic verse, on the Greek model and in the Greek tradition, has been written as, for example, the pages from where the Herald of Eumolpus enters with

“Old men, grey borderers on the march of death”  
 to the advent of the Athenian Messenger with  
 “High things of strong-souled men that loved their land”  
 after the close of the magnificent chorus beginning

“Many loves of many a mood and many a kind  
 Fill the life of man, and mould the secret mind . . . .”

I had selected for this volume the (surely in its kind unequalled) battle description given by the Athenian Herald, beginning

“I have no will to weave too fine or far,  
 Oh queen, the weft of sweet with bitter speech,  
 Bright words with darkling . . . .

with its superb central image of two vast clashing waves—

“and round its lords that met  
 Paused all the reeling battle: two main waves  
 Meeting, one hurled sheer from the sea-wall back  
 That shocks it sideways, one right in from sea  
 Charging, that full in face takes at one blow  
 That whole recoil and ruin . . . .  
 Crest fronting crest hung, wave to wave rose poised,  
 Then clashed, breaker to breaker; cloud with cloud  
 In heaven, chariot with chariot closed on earth,  
 One fourfold flash and thunder . . . .”

and the speech of Praxithea beginning “I praise the gods for Athens,” with the final noble sunset-calm of the words of Athena herself: but on reconsideration decided against their inclusion, mainly on the ground that *Erechtheus* would suffer

as much by arbitrary brief excerpt as would *Atalanta in Calydon*.

*Atalanta* appeared early in 1865. Before the year was out, *Chastelard* (which, as will be remembered, was written or at least begun in the author's last year as an undergraduate at Oxford) was also published. The two dramas are as different as two works in dramatic form could be. The difference is not, as often averred, between the work of the romanticist and that of the classicist. The "classicism" of *Atalanta* does not hide the "romanticism" of the author. It was not an old-world Greek but a modern "romanticist" who wrote

"When the hounds of Spring are on winter's traces,  
The mother of months in meadow or plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;  
And the brown bright nightingale amorous  
Is half assuaged for Itylus,  
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,  
The tongueless vigil and all the pain—"

The difference lies in the choice of model: in the selection of the Shakespearian method and manner instead of the Sophoclean method and manner. With the one the poet had a freer play for his unequalled metrical invention: with the other a more intimate and familiar method of development of his dramatic conception.

There is no modern dramatic trilogy that in length, sustained power, and continuity of beauty can be compared with the trilogy of Mary of Scotland—*Chastelard*, *Bothwell*, and *Mary Stuart*. Of these, the most difficult achievement is the third: the most sustained and powerful the second: the most beautiful, the first. Even if Swinburne had never written another line on the subject of *Mary Stuart*, *Chastelard* would retain its place as one of the finest of modern poetic plays. Certainly it is not a masterpiece of the front rank like *Atalanta*, but it is none the less a masterly achievement with a beauty beyond that of any dramatic poem by any of Mr. Swinburne's contemporaries. This tragedy of the love of the poet Chastelard for a woman who could not possibly be true to one man, or true even to love, has an eternal significance. *Chastelard*

wins us by his dauntless passion for the beautiful Queen o' Scots, his defiance of death and contempt for all else that life can offer if it does not offer the supreme passion, and by his heroism of loyalty to a false love: Mary commands our reluctant allegiance by her exquisite womanhood, her beauty, her youth, her high destiny and our knowledge of her tragic fate: and that other impressive "secondary personage," Mary Beaton, compels our sorrowful and pitying love. Everything turns upon the truth and loyalty of one woman. But Chastelard is a poet, and reckless of life and all save love, and Mary is one of those women who lie by instinct and of necessity—

"I know her ways of loving, all of them:  
A sweet soft way the first is; afterward  
It burns and bites like fire; the end of that,  
Charred dust and eyelids bitten through with smoke."

So Chastelard is heroically true to love and to his lover, and Mary for all her talk of truth and honour shows herself in her attitude towards the man to whom she has given her love both a coward and traitor. So intense is her self-sophistication that she remains unable to realise her perfidy, and thus the last irony is added to the bitter tragi-comedy of her love-story. Even when, smitten by an unusual remorse, she obtains a reprieve to save the life of her lover, she remembers that her "fair name" might be further hurt if he should live, and so she comes ignobly to his cell to reclaim the reprieve, trusting to his loyalty of love even when he knows the full measure of her cowardice and falsehood. But Chastelard has known her far better than she could ever know him, and has already destroyed the document that was to give him freedom and life. With one lover's kisses on her lips she turns to another, and then, and later when "true love" ended on the scaffold, and the usher cried "make way for my lord of Bothwell next the queen," "laughed graciously." It is the eternal comedy of the poet and his mistress.

*Bothwell* is the longest play in the language. It is impossible for the stage, and is inevitably wearisome at times even as a drama for the mind. But it is wearisome only as life is wearisome, and has the same rhythmic swaying between the low levels and the high, the like monotones and surprises, the like littlenesses and tragical miscarriages. Only, it differs

in this, that it is without either the broad humour whose exaggeration is farce or the refined humour whose smile is comedy. It is a masterpiece on a colossal scale, but has to share the fate of colossal masterpieces, and be read only by students and enthusiasts. In parts it contains some of Mr. Swinburne's finest dramatic writing. The trilogy covers, in its period of composition, nearly twenty years, for though *Chastelard* was not published till 1865, it was a text revised from an earlier version, written before *Atalanta in Calydon*. *Bothwell* appeared in 1874, and *Mary Stuart* in 1881. Apart from the infinite beauty and charm of these plays considered as poetry, they have a deep interest as an historical interpretation, by a student profoundly versed in the complicated chronicles which deal with the problems of Scottish and English history at the period in question: and a perhaps deeper and more abiding interest for the psychologist, in the evolution of Mary's character, of her inward and outer life.

The year after the publication of *Chastelard* saw the issue of *Poems and Ballads*. Many of the poems had been written some years earlier ("Faustine," for example, was printed in the *Spectator* in 1862, and, as we have already seen, "Laus Veneris" and the "Hymn to Proserpine" were in that year recited to a friend): perhaps nearly all had been written when "Atalanta" appeared in 1865. In that year, the small literary public which "read" hailed Swinburne as a young poet of extraordinary promise and achievement: in 1866 the same public, or the major part, and the vast public beyond which followed as it ever follows any lead skilfully given to it, heaped anger and abuse upon the head of the brilliant offender against the conventionalities so dearly treasured. Where Swinburne had been welcomed he was now solemnly banned, when not metaphorically threatened with the doom of St. Stephen. No defence that has appeared has the convincing force of Mr. Swinburne's own famous defence. At this date, it seems enough to say that while the outcry was largely foolish where not hypocritical, and sometimes malicious where not foolish, there was enough basis to give hostility a definite ground to take up whence to proclaim anathema: and to add that for some pages, for some poems or parts of poems, the best thing would have been a remorseless blue-pencil. But it is commonly overlooked that the defects calling for the blue pencil

were defects of immature judgment in art, not of "public morality."

This is neither the time nor place for the reopening of a controversy unlikely to afford persuasion to the public of any time or conviction to the artist of any period. A gulf separates the mental world wherein a few minds think and act, and the mental world wherein the many alternate between stagnation and a blind following. No controversies, no arguments, no persuasions, can ever be but temporary bridges which the next generation will overflow and bear away.

Nor can I enter here on a critical estimate of the *Poems and Ballads* and the *Songs Before Sunrise*. This volume is a selection from Mr. Swinburne's poetry, and the introduction to it is intended to serve another end than critical exposition. So for the present it must suffice to say that by common consent no volume of lyrical poetry such as *Poems and Ballads* has appeared in English, nor is like to appear again: that it has a music of its own absolutely unequalled and unapproached: and that among much of a loveliness, novelty, and charm beyond belief for those who do not know the book, there are poems which only a proudly reckless youth would write and only a youthful judgment include.

With the *Poems and Ballads* in 1866, and the *Songs Before Sunrise* five years later, Algernon Charles Swinburne took the place that no other poet had been worthy to occupy since Shelley's death.

If one were to divide Mr. Swinburne's poetical career into two main periods, the first would end in 1881, with the publication of *Mary Stuart*. This period would comprise (after the "prelude" of the two early and immature plays) *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Erechtheus*, *Poems and Ballads*, the second series of *Poems and Ballads* (1878), *Songs Before Sunrise*, *Songs of Two Nations*, *Songs of the Springtides*, *Studies in Song*, and the great trilogy (1866—1881) of *Chastelard*, *Bothwell*, and *Mary Stuart*.

The second period would comprise the part dramatic, part narrative, wholly lyrical *Tristram of Lyonesse*, one of the great works of the poet; the powerful drama of *Marino Faliero*; *Loorine*, so dramatic and moving; the modern but surely far from convincing play *The Sisters*; the picturesque versi-

fied Arthurian narrative, *The Tale of Balen*; and the recent *Rosamond, Queen of the Lombards*: with, for lyrical collections, the *Century of Roundels*, *A Midsummer Holiday*, the third series of *Poems and Ballads*, and *Astrophel*, one of Mr. Swinburne's finest books.

The period, however, which ends with the close of the trilogy of Mary Stuart and with the most noble elegiac poem written since "Adonais" will to many seem the great period. This much may certainly be granted, that if Mr. Swinburne had written no dramatic verse after the conclusion of the Mary trilogy and no lyrical verse after the "*Ave atque vale*", which throws so splendid a glow over the second series of *Poems and Ballads*, his fame and place would be no less and no lower than they are to-day, and would, so far as contemporary judgment can foretell, stand assured against any change or chance of the literary fates.

But it is still the indiscriminating vogue with the generality of reviewers to aver that there is nothing of the old magic in Mr. Swinburne's later poetry. I think it would be difficult to name any living poet whose work reveals more of essential poetry than is to be found in these later writings. This is not to compare one period with another, or one masterpiece and one gathering of song with another masterpiece and another gathering of song. If there are some who would say "we have 'the real Swinburne' in *Atalanta* and *Poems and Ballads*," there are others who would make the same affirmation of *Tristram of Lyonesse* and *Astrophel* or *Studies in Song*. Recently I saw it stated that we might look in vain for any later versely this poet which had any thought behind it or had anything of the old "pantheistic fervour and spiritual absorption of 'Hertha'." The statement was not, and is not, worth refutation, but one would like to know if the writer had read "*The Nympholept*", that splendid nature-poem which once and for all should do away with the like foolish misstatements.

This beautiful and strangely ignored poem is included in the fourth section of the present volume a section which should, I think, sufficiently meet the assertions of those readers and critics who aver that in his later period Mr. Swinburne has lost his old secret and can interest still but no longer charm. Apart from the nobly ordered verse of "A

Nympholept", what charm of music, simple and sweet, in "The Mill-Garden" and "A Haven", in "Heartsease Country" and "An Old Saying"!\*

It was impossible to give any adequate idea of the scope and beauty of *Atalanta in Calydon* by excerpts, nor could these, however carefully selected, not lose by severance from the context. For every reason it seemed imperative to give this masterpiece intact. In the section which follows are given those poems from the *Poems and Ballads* and *Songs Before Sunrise* which are perhaps worthiest of the author's present fame rather than accordant with an earlier reputation. There remain many about whose inclusion the present editor hesitated long, and others which he would see with content in any other collection, and others which I think are perhaps best to be read only in the youthful volume where they have their sole proper place. Such as it is, I hope the present selection will please those who love what is best and most enduring in the earlier lyrical work of Mr. Swinburne.

In the second section are grouped some of those poems which reveal the author's lifelong passion for the sea—a passion that might well be called adoration, and that has permeated his poetry so widely and deeply that on almost every page of lyrical writing we smell the salt savour or hear the surge of the wave or the long sigh of many waters. Swinburne is the one poet of the sea: the one poet to whom throughout his life the sea has been a passion and a dream, a bride and a comrade, the "wild brother" of humanity and the mirror of Fate, the beginning and the end, the image of life and the countenance of death. We feel to be wholly true of him that intense obsession, that pantheistic ecstasy, which lives in lines such as

"I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,  
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;  
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,  
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside."

It would take careful count to say how many poems, long and short, end with flung spray and the cry of the sea-wind.

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\* The beautiful little song "Love laid his sleepless head", though interpolated in this section, belongs to the earlier period.

*Erechtheus* closes with “the friendship and fame of the sea,” and some such line (repeated in kind as it has been a hundred times) will, we may be sure, close the *Songs Before Sunset* when, in the fullness of time, Mr. Swinburne will give us that volume. This section of ocean-music rightly includes “On the Verge” and “By the North Sea” (whose opening is among the unforgettable things of poetry) and ends with one of the poet’s loveliest lyrics, “A Forsaken Garden”—which is, as it were, an echoing shell flung shoreward, with its whispers of the sea’s secret—and with the incomparable “Swimmer’s Dream”.

I have grouped in the third section a few of those poems so eminently characteristic of the author—those which reveal his life-long homage to Victor Hugo, his love of children, his admiration of the old Scottish and Border ballads. With them are a song and a lovely fragment from *Loctrine*: certain noble sonnets: and a poem as eminently characteristic of Mr. Swinburne as any in this book—who is before all else English of the English in the worthiest acceptation of the phrase—“England: An Ode.”

At the close of the fourth section, to which allusion has already been made . . . so fragrant with the perfume of Heartsease Country, so luminous with the light of thought and dream in the long and beautiful poem which stands first . . . comes *Ave Atque Vale*—the poem which, if Destiny decreed that Swinburne were to live by one poem only would doubtless generally be considered the supreme achievement. Here, surely, to quote the poet’s own words, from one of his critical essays, here we have the translation of natural thought and feeling into the sovereign style, the eternal and universal dialect, of imaginative and passionate poetry.

It is impossible in a volume of selections to give all that one would gladly give, or to gratify every individual choice as to what is most desirable. The aim should be a selection so far as possible adequately representative, but made with personal judgment and preference. The method has obvious drawbacks, but permits a variety with unity otherwise impracticable. Nor should it be forgotten that even when a selection such as this has been made, the exigencies of space almost inevitably demand still further rejections—as, for example, from this volume, the beautiful poem “Siena”, re-

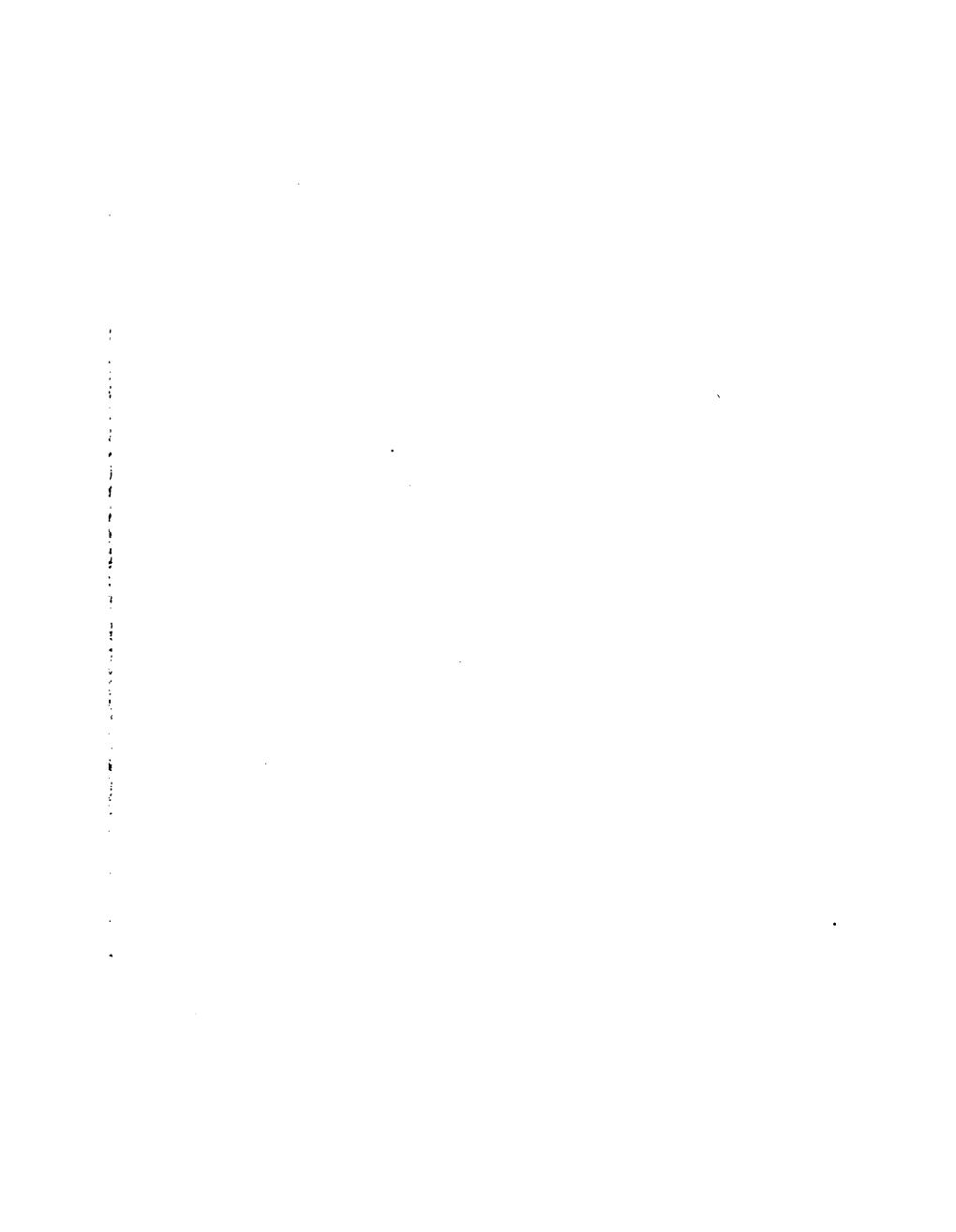
jected at the last moment because of its length; and that noble threnody inspired by the genius and memory of Marlowe, "In the Bay", rejected only because of the inclusion of a yet nobler elegiac poem, the unequalled "Ave Atque Vale".

Perhaps most to be regretted is the exclusion of any excerpt from *Songs of the Springtides*. I understand that this is one of the least known of Mr. Swinburne's writings. It ought to be known intimately to every lover of his poetry. Possibly more than any other of his books it affords, in glimpses, that direct autobiographical revelation which is rare in this poet's work. The three long lyrical compositions of which the volume consists are "Thalassius", "On the Cliffs", and "The Garden of Cymodoce". They contain some of Mr. Swinburne's loveliest lines. Than the first there is no single poem more characteristic of the author, and for this and its autobiographical significance, it would but for its length have been given here. Behind the veil of "Thalassius" is the poetic self of the poet, as behind the veil of "Alastor" is the poetic self of Shelley. All the lines from "High things the high song taught him" are a true revelation of the author of *Songs Before Sunrise* and of much else that falls into line with that famous volume echoing the voice of freedom, the cry of revolution.

For sheer genius in the wedding of "sound and sense" what contemporary poet could have written the superb Bacchanalian passage, or that other of tempest: or who else could have written the lovely episode where the young Thalassius goes seaward, to the

"Dense water-walls and clear dusk waterways . . .  
The deep divine dark dayshine of the sea—"

In the beautiful poem "On The Cliffs" the author discloses, what every intimate reader of his work must have discerned, his passionate sympathy with Sappho. In "Ave atque Vale," and in the Latin and English poems to Catullus, and in "On The Cliffs" he has himself revealed what lovers of his strange muse knew, that his poetic kindred are Sappho, Catullus, and Baudelaire—as again (in the frank and memorable twenty-sixth stanza of "In The Bay") with Marlowe and Shelley: that though so different from each in achievement, whether known fragmentarily or fully, he is allied in



## ATALANTA IN CALYDON.

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### THE PERSONS.

CHIEF HUNTSMAN.	TOXEUS.
CHORUS.	PLEXIPPUS.
ALTHAEA.	HERALD.
MELEAGER.	MESSANGER.
GENEUS.	SECOND MESSANGER.
ATALANTA.	

Ἵστω δ' ὅστις οὐχ ὑπάπτερος  
φροντίσιν δασίς.  
τὰν ἀ παιδολύμας τάλαινα Θεο-  
τιὰς μήσατο  
πυρδαῆ τινα πρόνοιαν,

καταίθουσα παιδὸς δαφοινὸν  
δαλὸν ἥλικ' ἐπεὶ μολὼν  
ματρόθεν κελάδησε  
σύμμετρον τε δαι βίον  
μοιρόθραυτον ἐς ἄμαρ.

ÆSCH. Cho. 602—616.

### THE ARGUMENT.

ALTHAEA, daughter of Thestius and Eurythemis, queen of Calydon, being with child of Meleager her first-born son, dreamed that she brought forth a brand burning; and, upon his birth, came the three Fates and prophesied of him three things, namely these: that he should have great strength of his hands, and good fortune in this life, and that he should live no longer when the brand then in the fire were consumed: wherefore his mother plucked it forth, and kept it by her. And the child being a man grown sailed with Jason after the fleece of gold, and won himself great praise of all men living; and, when the tribes of the North and West made war upon Aetolia,

*Swinburne, Atalanta.*

he fought against their army and scattered it. But Artemis, having at the first stirred up these tribes to war against Oeneus king of Calydon, because he had offered sacrifice to all the gods saving her alone, but her he had forgotten to honour, was yet more wrath because of the destruction of this army, and sent upon the land of Calydon a wild boar which slew many and wasted all their increase, but him could none slay, and many went against him and perished. Then were all the chief men of Greece gathered together, and among them Atalanta daughter of Iasius the Arcadian, a virgin; for whose sake Artemis let slay the boar, seeing she favoured the maiden greatly; and Meleager having despatched it gave the spoil thereof to Atalanta, as one beyond measure enamoured of her; but the brethren of Althaea his mother, Toxeus and Plexippus, with such others as disliked that she only should bear off the praise whereas many had borne the labour, laid wait for her to take away her spoil; but Meleager fought against them, and slew them: whom when Althaea their sister beheld and knew to be slain of her son, she waxed for wrath and sorrow like as one mad, and, taking the brand whereby the measure of her son's life was meted to him, she cast it upon a fire; and with the wasting thereof his life likewise wasted away, that being brought back to his father's house he died in a brief space; and his mother also endured not long after for very sorrow; and this was his end, and the end of that hunting.

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#### CHIEF HUNTSMAN.

Maiden, and mistress of the months and stars  
Now folded in the flowerless fields of heaven,  
Goddess whom all gods love with threefold heart,  
Being treble in thy divided deity,  
A light for dead men and dark hours, a foot  
Swift on the hills as morning, and a hand  
To all things fierce and fleet that roar and range  
Mortal, with gentler shafts than snow or sleep;  
Hear now and help and lift no violent hand,  
But favourable and fair as thine eye's beam  
Hidden and shown in heaven; for I all night

Amid the king's hounds and the hunting men  
Have wrought and worshipped toward thee; nor shall man  
See goodlier hounds or deadlier edge of spears;  
But for the end, that lies unreached at yet  
Between the hands and on the knees of gods.  
Oh fair-faced sun killing the stars and dews  
And dreams and desolation of the night!  
Rise up, shine, stretch thine hand out, with thy bow  
Touch the most dimmest height of trembling heaven,  
And burn and break the dark about thy ways,  
Shot through and through with arrows; let thine hair  
Lighten as flame above that flameless shell  
Which was the moon, and thine eyes fill the world  
And thy lips kindle with swift beams; let earth  
Laugh, and the long sea fiery from thy feet  
Through all the roar and ripple of streaming springs  
And foam in reddening flakes and flying flowers  
Shaken from hands and blown from lips of nymphs  
Whose hair or breast divides the wandering wave  
With salt close tresses cleaving lock to lock,  
All gold, or shuddering and unfurrowed snow;  
And all the winds about thee with their wings,  
And fountain-heads of all the watered world;  
Each horn of Achelous, and the green  
Euenus, wedded with the straitening sea.  
For in fair time thou comest; come also thou,  
Twin-born with him, and virgin, Artemis,  
And give our spears their spoil, the wild boar's hide,  
Sent in thine anger against us for sin done  
And bloodless altars without wine or fire.  
Him now consume thou; for thy sacrifice  
With sanguine-shining steam divides the dawn,  
And one, the maiden rose of all thy maids,

Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled,  
Fair as the snow and footed as the wind,  
From Ladon and well-wooded Mænarus  
Over the firm hills and the fleeting sea  
Hast thou drawn hither, and many an armèd king,  
Heroes, the crown of men, like gods in fight.  
Moreover out of all the Ætolian land,  
From the full-flowered Lelantian pasturage  
To what of fruitful field the son of Zeus  
Won from the roaring river and labouring sea  
When the wild god shrank in his horn and fled  
And foamed and lessened through his wrathful fords,  
Leaving clear lands that steamed with sudden sun,  
These virgins with the lightening of the day  
Bring thee fresh wreaths and their own sweeter hair,  
Luxurious locks and flower-like mixed with flowers,  
Clean offering, and chaste hymns; but me the time  
Divides from these things; whom do thou not less  
Help and give honour, and to mine hounds good speed,  
And edge to spears, and luck to each man's hand.

#### CHORUS.

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,  
The mother of months in meadow or plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;  
And the brown bright nightingale amorous  
Is half assuaged for Itylus,  
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,  
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,  
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,

With a noise of winds and many rivers,  
With a clamour of waters, and with might;  
Bind on thy sandals, Oh thou most fleet,  
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet;  
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,  
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,  
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?  
Oh that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,  
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!  
For the stars and the winds are unto her  
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;  
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,  
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,  
And all the season of snows and sins;  
The days dividing lover and lover,  
The light that loses, the night that wins;  
And time remembered is grief forgotten,  
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,  
And in green underwood and cover  
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,  
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,  
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes  
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;  
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,  
And the oat is heard above the lyre,  
And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes  
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,  
 Fleeter or foot than the fleet-foot kid,  
 Follows with dancing and fills with delight  
 The Mænad and the Bassarid;  
 And soft as lips that laugh and hide  
 The laughing leaves of the trees divide,  
 And screen from seeing and leave in sight  
 The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair  
 Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;  
 The wild vine slipping down leaves bare  
 Her bright breast shortening into sighs;  
 The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,  
 But the berried ivy catches and cleaves  
 To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare  
 The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

## ALTHÆA.

What do ye singing? what is this ye sing?

## CHORUS.

Flowers bring we, and pure lips that please the gods,  
 And raiment meet for service: lest the day  
 Turn sharp with all its honey in our lips.

## ALTHÆA.

Night, a black hound, follows the white fawn day,  
 Swifter than dreams the white flown feet of sleep;  
 Will ye pray back the night with any prayers?  
 And though the spring put back a little while  
 Winter, and snows that plague all men for sin,  
 And the iron time of cursing, yet I know  
 Spring shall be ruined with the rain, and storm  
 Eat up like fire the ashen autumn days.

I marvel what men do with prayers awake  
Who dream and die with dreaming; any god,  
Yea the least god of all things called divine,  
Is more than sleep and waking; yet we say,  
Perchance by praying a man shall match his god.  
For if sleep have no mercy, and man's dreams  
Bite to the blood and burn into the bone,  
What shall this man do waking? By the gods,  
He shall not pray to dream sweet things to-night,  
Having dreamt once more bitter things than death.

CHORUS.

Queen, but what is it that hath burnt thine heart?  
For thy speech flickers like a blown-out flame.

ALTHEA.

Look, ye say well, and know not what ye say;  
For all my sleep is turned into a fire,  
And all my dreams to stuff that kindles it.

CHORUS.

Yet one doth well being patient of the gods.

ALTHEA.

Yea, lest they smite us with some four-foot plague.

CHORUS.

But when time spreads find out some herb for it.

ALTHEA.

And with their healing herbs infect our blood.

CHORUS.

What ails thee to be jealous of their ways?

ALTHEA.

What if they give us poisonous drinks for wine?

CHORUS.

They have their will; much talking mends it not.

ALTHEA.

And gall for milk, and cursing for a prayer?

## CHORUS.

Have they not given life, and the end of life?

## ALTHAEA.

Lo, where they heal, they help not; thus they do,  
They mock us with a little piteousness,  
And we say prayers, and weep; but at the last,  
Sparing awhile, they smite and spare no whit.

## CHORUS.

Small praise man gets dispraising the high gods:  
What have they done that thou dishonourest them?

## ALTHAEA.

First Artemis for all this harried land  
I praise not, and for wasting of the boar  
That mars with tooth and tusk and fiery feet  
Green pasturage and the grace of standing corn  
And meadow and marsh with springs and unblown leaves,  
Flocks and swift herds and all that bite sweet grass,  
I praise her not; what things are these to praise?

## CHORUS.

But when the king did sacrifice, and gave  
Each god fair dues of wheat and blood and wine,  
Her not with bloodshed nor burnt-offering  
Revered he, nor with salt or cloven cake;  
Wherefore being wroth she plagued the land; but now  
Takes off from us fate and her heavy things.  
Which deed of these twain were not good to praise?  
For a just deed looks always either way  
With blameless eyes, and mercy is no fault.

## ALTHAEA.

Yea, but a curse she hath sent above all these  
To hurt us where she healed us; and hath lit  
Fire where the old fire went out, and where the wind  
Slackened, hath blown on us with deadlier air.

## CHORUS.

What storm is this that tightens all our sail?

ALTHÆA.

Love, a thwart sea-wind full of rain and foam.

CHORUS.

Whence blown, and born under what stormier star?

ALTHÆA.

Southward across Euenus from the sea.

CHORUS.

Thy speech turns toward Arcadia like blown wind.

ALTHÆA.

Sharp as the north sets when the snows are out.

CHORUS.

Nay, for this maiden hath no touch of love.

ALTHÆA.

I would she had sought in some cold gulf of sea  
Love, or in dens where strange beasts lurk, or fire,  
Or snows on the extreme hills, or iron land  
Where no spring is; I would she had sought therein  
And found, or ever love had found her here.

CHORUS.

She is holier than all holy days or things,  
The sprinkled water or fume of perfect fire;  
Chaste, dedicated to pure prayers, and filled  
With higher thoughts than heaven; a maiden clean,  
Pure iron, fashioned for a sword; and man  
She loves not; what should one such do with love?

ALTHÆA.

Look you, I speak not as one light of wit,  
But as a queen speaks, being heart-vexed; for oft  
I hear my brothers wrangling in mid hall,  
And am not moved; and my son chiding them,  
And these things nowise move me, but I know

Foolish and wise men must be to the end,  
And feed myself with patience; but this most,  
This moves me, that for wise men as for fools  
Love is one thing, an evil thing, and turns  
Choice words and wisdom into fire and air.  
And in the end shall no joy come, but grief,  
Sharp words and soul's division and fresh tears  
Flower-wise upon the old root of tears brought forth,  
Fruit-wise upon the old flower of tears sprung up,  
Pitiful sighs, and much regrafted pain.  
These things are in my presage, and myself  
Am part of them and know not; but in dreams  
The gods are heavy on me, and all the fates  
Shed fire across my eyelids mixed with night,  
And burn me blind, and disilluminate  
My sense of seeing, and my perspicuous soul  
Darken with vision; seeing I see not, hear  
And hearing am not holpen, but mine eyes  
Stain many tender broideries in the bed  
Drawn up about my face that I may weep  
And the king wake not; and my brows and lips  
Tremble and sob in sleeping, like swift flames  
That tremble, or water when it sobs with heat  
Kindled from under; and my tears fill my breast  
And speck the fair dyed pillows round the king  
With barren showers and salter than the sea,  
Such dreams divide me dreaming; for long since  
I dreamed that out of this my womb had sprung  
Fire and a firebrand; this was ere my son,  
Meleager, a goodly flower in fields of fight,  
Felt the light touch him coming forth, and wailed  
Childlike; but yet he was not; and in time  
I bare him, and my heart was great; for yet

So royally was never strong man born,  
Nor queen so nobly bore as noble a thing  
As this my son was: such a birth God sent  
And such a grace to bear it. Then came in  
Three weaving women, and span each a thread,  
Saying This for strength and That for luck, and one  
Saying Till the brand upon the hearth burn down,  
So long shall this man see good days and live.  
And I with gathered raiment from the bed  
Sprang, and drew forth the brand, and cast on it  
Water, and trod the flame bare-foot, and crushed  
With naked hand spark beaten out of spark  
And blew against and quenched it; for I said,  
These are the most high Fates that dwell with us,  
And we find favour a little in their sight,  
A little, and more we miss of, and much time  
Foils us; howbeit they have pitied me, Oh son,  
And thee most piteous, thee a tenderer thing  
Than any flower of fleshy seed alive.  
Wherefore I kissed and hid him with my hands,  
And covered under arms and hair, and wept,  
And feared to touch him with my tears, and laughed;  
So light a thing was this man, grown so great  
Men cast their heads back, seeing against the sun  
Blaze the armed man carven on his shield, and hear  
The laughter of little bells along the brace  
Ring, as birds singing or flutes blown, and watch,  
High up, the cloven shadow of either plume  
Divide the bright light of the brass, and make  
His helmet as a windy and wintering moon  
Seen through blown cloud and plumelike drift, when ships  
Drive, and men strive with all the sea, and oars  
Break, and the beaks dip under, drinking death;

Yet was he then but a span long, and moaned  
With inarticulate mouth inseparate words,  
And with blind lips and fingers wrung my breast  
Hard, and thrust out with foolish hands and feet,  
Murmuring; but those grey women with bound hair  
Who fright the gods frighted not him; he laughed  
Seeing them, and pushed out hands to feel and haul  
Distaff and thread, intangible; but they  
Passed, and I hid the brand, and in my heart  
Laughed likewise, having all my will of heaven.  
But now I know not if to left or right  
The gods have drawn us hither; for again  
I dreamt, and saw the black brand burst on fire  
As a branch bursts in flower, and saw the flame  
Fade flower-wise, and Death came and with dry lips  
Blew the charred ash into my breast; and Love  
Trampled the ember and crushed it with swift feet.  
This I have also at heart; that not for me,  
Not for me only or son of mine, Oh girls,  
The gods have wrought life, and desire of life,  
Heart's love and heart's division; but for all  
There shines one sun and one wind blows till night.  
And when night comes the wind sinks and the sun,  
And there is no light after, and no storm,  
But sleep and much forgetfulness of things.  
In such wise I gat knowledge of the gods  
Years hence, and heard high sayings of one most wise,  
Eurythemis my mother, who beheld  
With eyes alive and spake with lips of these  
As one on earth disfleshed and disallied  
From breath or blood corruptible; such gifts  
Time gave her, and an equal soul to these  
And equal face to all things; thus she said.

But whatsoever intolerable or glad  
The swift hours weave and unweave, I go hence  
Full of mine own soul, perfect of myself,  
Toward mine and me sufficient; and what chance  
The gods cast lots for and shake out on us,  
That shall we take, and that much bear withal.  
And now, before these gather to the hunt,  
I will go arm my son and bring him forth,  
Lest love or some man's anger work him harm.

## CHORUS.

Before the beginning of years  
There came to the making of man  
Time, with a gift of tears;  
Grief, with a glass that ran;  
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;  
Summer, with flowers that fell;  
Remembrance fallen from heaven,  
And madness risen from hell;  
Strength without hands to smite;  
Love that endures for a breath;  
Night, the shadow of light,  
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand  
Fire, and the falling of tears,  
And a measure of sliding sand  
From under the feet of the years;  
And froth and drift of the sea;  
And dust of the labouring earth;  
And bodies of things to be  
In the houses of death and of birth;

And wrought with weeping and laughter,  
And fashioned with loathing and love,  
With life before and after  
And death beneath and above,  
For a day and a night and a morrow,  
That his strength might endure for a span  
With travail and heavy sorrow,  
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south  
They gathered as unto strife;  
They breathed upon his mouth,  
They filled his body with life;  
Eyesight and speech they wrought  
For the veils of the soul therein,  
A time for labour and thought,  
A time to serve and to sin;  
They gave him light in his ways,  
And love, and a space for delight,  
And beauty and length of days,  
And night, and sleep in the night.  
His speech is a burning fire;  
With his lips he travaleth;  
In his heart is a blind desire,  
In his eyes foreknowledge of death;  
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;  
Sows, and he shall not reap;  
His life is a watch or a vision  
Between a sleep and a sleep.

MELEAGER.

Oh sweet new heaven and air without a star,  
Fair day, be fair and welcome, as to men  
With deeds to do and praise to pluck from thee.

Come forth a child, born with clear sound and light,  
 With laughter and swift limbs and prosperous looks;  
 That this great hunt with heroes for the hounds  
 May leave thee memorable and us well sped.

ALTHAEA.

Son, first I praise thy prayer, then bid thee speed;  
 But the gods hear men's hands before their lips,  
 And heed beyond all crying and sacrifice  
 Light of things done and noise of labouring men.  
 But thou, being armed and perfect for the deed,  
 Abide; for like rain-flakes in a wind they grow,  
 The men thy fellows, and the choice of the world,  
 Bound to root out the tuskèd plague, and leave  
 Thanks and safe days and peace in Calydon.

MELEAGER.

For the whole city and all the low-lying land  
 Flames, and the soft air sounds with them that come;  
 The gods give all these fruit of all their works.

ALTHAEA.

Set thine eye thither and fix thy spirit and say  
 Whom there thou knowest; for sharp mixed shadow and wind  
 Blown up between the morning and the mist,  
 With steam of steeds and flash of bridle or wheel,  
 And fire, and parcels of the broken dawn,  
 And dust divided by hard light, and spears  
 That shine and shift as the edge of wild beasts' eyes,  
 Smite upon mine; so fiery their blind edge  
 Burns, and bright points break up and baffle day.

MELEAGER.

The first, for many I know not, being far off,  
 Peleus the Larissæan, couched with whom  
 Sleeps the white sea-bred wife and silver-shod,  
 Fair as fled foam, a goddess; and their son

Most swift and splendid of men's children born,  
Most like a god, full of the future fame.

ALTHÆA.

Who are these shining like one sundered star?

MELEAGER.

Thy sister's sons, a double flower of men.

ALTHÆA.

Oh sweetest kin to me in all the world,  
Oh twin-born blood of Leda, gracious heads  
Like kindled lights in untempestuous heaven,  
Fair flower-like stars on the iron foam of fight,  
With what glad heart and kindliness of soul,  
Even to the staining of both eyes with tears  
And kindling of warm eyelids with desire,  
A great way off I greet you, and rejoice  
Seeing you so fair, and moulded like as gods.  
Far off ye come, and least in years of these,  
But lordliest, but worth love to look upon.

MELEAGER.

Even such (for sailing hither I saw far hence,  
And where Eurotas hollows his moist rock  
Nigh Sparta with a strenuous-hearted stream)  
Even such I saw their sisters; one swan-white,  
The little Helen, and less fair than she  
Fair Clytaemnestra, grave as pasturing fawns  
Who feed and fear some arrow; but at whiles,  
As one smitten with love or wrung with joy,  
She laughs and lightens with her eyes, and then  
Weeps; whereat Helen, having laughed, weeps too,  
And the other chides her, and she being chid speaks nought,  
But cheeks and lips and eyelids kisses her,  
Laughing; so fare they, as in their bloomless bud  
And full of unblown life, the blood of gods.

## ALTHÆA.

Sweet days befall them and good loves and lords,  
 And tender and temperate honours of the hearth,  
 Peace, and a perfect life and blameless bed.  
 But who shows next an eagle wrought in gold,  
 That flames and beats broad wings against the sun  
 And with void mouth gapes after emptier prey?

## MELEAGER.

Know by that sign the reign of Telamon  
 Between the fierce mouths of the encountering brine  
 On the strait reefs of twice-washed Salamis.

## ALTHÆA.

For like one great of hand he bears himself,  
 Vine-chapleted, with savours of the sea,  
 Glittering as wine and moving as a wave.  
 But who girt round there roughly follows him?

## MELEAGER.

Ancaeus, great of hand, an iron bulk,  
 Two-edged for fight as the axe against his arm,  
 Who drives against the surge of stormy spears  
 Full-sailed; him Cepheus follows, his twin-born,  
 Chief name next his of all Arcadian men.

## ALTHÆA.

Praise be with men abroad; chaste lives with us,  
 Home-keeping days and household reverences.

## MELEAGER.

Next by the left unsandalled foot know thou  
 The sail and oar of this Ætolian land,  
 Thy brethren, Toxeus and the violent-souled  
 Plexippus, over-swift with hand and tongue;  
 For hands are fruitful, but the ignorant mouth  
 Blows and corrupts their work with barren breath.

**ALTHÆA.**

Speech too bears fruit, being worthy; and air blows down  
Things poisonous, and high-seated violences,  
And with charmed words and songs have men put out  
Wild evil, and the fire of tyrannies.

**MELEAGER.**

Yea, all things have they, save the gods and love.

**ALTHÆA.**

Love thou the law and cleave to things ordained.

**MELEAGER.**

Law lives upon their lips whom these applaud.

**ALTHÆA.**

How sayest thou these? what god applauds new things?

**MELEAGER.**

Zeus, who hath fear and custom under foot.

**ALTHÆA.**

But loves not laws thrown down and lives awry.

**MELEAGER.**

Yet is not less himself than his own law.

**ALTHÆA.**

Nor shifts and shuffles old things up and down.

**MELEAGER.**

But what he will remoulds and discreates.

**ALTHÆA.**

Much, but not this, that each thing live its life.

**MELEAGER.**

Nor only live, but lighten and lift up higher.

**ALTHÆA.**

Pride breaks itself, and too much gained is gone.

**MELEAGER.**

Things gained are gone, but great things done endure.

## ALTHÆA.

Child, if a man serve law through all his life  
 And with his whole heart worship, him all gods  
 Praise; but who loves it only with his lips,  
 And not in heart and deed desiring it  
 Hides a perverse will with obsequious words,  
 Him heaven infatuates and his twin-born fate  
 Tracks, and gains on him, scenting sins far off,  
 And the swift hounds of violent death devour.  
 Be man at one with equal-minded gods,  
 So shall he prosper; not through laws torn up,  
 Violated rule and a new face of things.  
 A woman armed makes war upon herself,  
 Unwomanlike, and treads down use and wont  
 And the sweet common honour that she hath,  
 Love, and the cry of children, and the hand  
 Trothplight and mutual mouth of marriages.  
 This doth she, being unloved; whom if one love,  
 Not fire nor iron and the wide-mouthed wars  
 Are deadlier than her lips or braided hair.  
 For of the one comes poison, and a curse  
 Falls from the other and burns the lives of men.  
 But thou, son, be not filled with evil dreams,  
 Nor with desire of these things; for with time  
 Blind love burns out; but if one feed it full  
 Till some discolouring stain dyes all his life,  
 He shall keep nothing praiseworthy, nor die  
 The sweet wise death of old men honourable,  
 Who have lived out all the length of all their years  
 Blameless, and seen well-pleased the face of gods,  
 And without shame and without fear have wrought  
 Things memorable, and while their days held out  
 In sight of all men and the sun's great light

Have gat them glory and given of their own praise  
To the earth that bare them and the day that bred,  
Home friends and far-off hospitalities,  
And filled with gracious and memorial fame  
Lands loved of summer or washed by violent seas,  
Towns populous and many unfooted ways,  
And alien lips and native with their own.  
But when white age and venerable death  
Mow down the strength and life within their limbs,  
Drain out the blood and darken their clear eyes,  
Immortal honour is on them, having past  
Through splendid life and death desirable  
To the clear seat and remote throne of souls,  
Lands indiscernable in the unheard-of west,  
Round which the strong stream of a sacred sea  
Rolls without wind for ever, and the snow  
There shows not her white wings and windy feet,  
Nor thunder nor swift rain saith anything,  
Nor the sun burns, but all things rest and thrive;  
And these, filled full of days, divine and dead,  
Sages and singers fiery from the god,  
And such as loved their land and all things good  
And, best beloved of best men, liberty,  
Free lives and lips, free hands of men free-born,  
And whatsoever on earth was honourable  
And whosoever of all the ephemeral seed,  
Live there a life no liker to the gods  
But nearer than their life of terrene days.  
Love thou such life, and look for such a death.  
But from the light and fiery dreams of love  
Spring heavy sorrows and a sleepless life,  
Visions not dreams, whose lids no charm shall close,  
Nor song assuage them waking; and swift death

Crushes with sterile feet the unripening ear,  
Treads out the timeless vintage; whom do thou  
Eschewing embrace the luck of this thy life,  
Not without honour; and it shall bear to thee  
Such fruit as men reap from spent hours and wear,  
Few men, but happy; of whom be thou, Oh son,  
Happiest, if thou submit thy soul to fate,  
And set thine eyes and heart on hopes high-born  
And divine deeds and abstinence divine.  
So shalt thou be toward all men all thy days  
As light and might communicable, and burn  
From heaven among the stars above the hours,  
And break not as a man breaks nor burn down:  
For to whom other of all heroic names  
Have the gods given his life in hand as thine?  
And gloriously hast thou lived, and made thy life  
To me that bare thee and to all men born  
Thankworthy, a praise forever; and hast won fame  
When wild wars broke all round thy father's house,  
And the mad people of windy mountain ways  
Laid spears against us like a sea, and all  
Ætolia thundered with Thessalian hoofs;  
Yet these, as wind baffles the foam, and beats  
Straight back the relaxed ripple, didst thou break  
And loosen all their lances, till undone  
And man from man they fell; for ye twain stood  
God against god, Ares and Artemis,  
And thou the mightier; wherefore she unleashed  
A sharp-toothed curse thou too shalt overcome;  
For in the greener blossom of thy life  
Ere the full blade caught flower, and when time gave  
Respite, thou didst not slacken soul nor sleep,  
But with great hand and heart seek praise of men

Out of sharp straits and many a grievous thing,  
Seeing the strange foam of undivided seas  
On channels never sailed in, and by shores  
Where the old winds cease not blowing, and all the night  
Thunders, and day is no delight to men.

## CHORUS.

Meleager, a noble wisdom and fair words  
The gods have given this woman; hear thou these.

## MELEAGER.

Oh mother, I am not fain to strive in speech  
Nor set my mouth against thee, who art wise  
Even as they say, and full of sacred words.  
But one thing I know surely, and cleave to this;  
That though I be not subtle of wit as thou  
Nor womanlike to weave sweet words, and melt  
Mutable minds of wise men as with fire,  
I too, doing justly and reverencing the gods,  
Shall not want wit to see what things be right.  
For whom they love and whom reject, being gods,  
There is no man but seeth, and in good time  
Submits himself, refraining all his heart.  
And I too, as thou sayest, have seen great things;  
Seen otherwhere, but chiefly when the sail  
First caught between stretched ropes the roaring west,  
And all our oars smote eastward, and the wind  
First flung round faces of seafaring men  
White splendid snow-flakes of the sundering foam,  
And the first furrow in virginal green sea  
Followed the plunging ploughshare of hewn pine,  
And closed, as when deep sleep subdues man's breath  
Lips close and heart subsides; and closing, shone  
Sunlike with many a Nereid's hair, and moved  
Round many a trembling mouth of doubtful gods,

Risen out of sunless and sonorous gulfs  
Through waning water and into shallow light,  
That watched us; and when flying the dove was snared  
As with men's hands, but we shot after and sped  
Clear through the irremeable Symplegades;  
And chieliest when hoar beach and herbless cliff  
Stood out ahead from Colchis, and we heard  
Clefts hoarse with wind, and saw through narrowing reefs  
The lightning of the intolerable wave  
Flash, and the white wet flame of breakers burn  
Far under a kindling south-wind, as a lamp  
Burns and bends all its blowing flame one way;  
Wild heights untravelled of the wind, and vales  
Cloven seaward by their violent streams, and white  
With bitter flowers and bright salt scurf of brine;  
Heard sweep their sharp swift gales, and bowing birdwise  
Shriek with birds' voices, and with furious feet  
Tread loose the long skirts of a storm; and saw  
The whole white Euxine clash together and fall  
Full-mouthed, and thunderous from a thousand throats;  
Yet we drew thither and won the fleece and won  
Medea, deadlier than the sea; but there  
Seeing many a wonder and fearful things to men  
I saw not one thing like this one seen here,  
Most fair and fearful, feminine, a god,  
Faultless; whom I that love not, being unlike,  
Fear, and give honour, and choose from all the gods.

## CENEUS.

Lady, the daughter of Thestius, and thou, son,  
Not ignorant of your strife nor light of wit,  
Scared with vain dreams and fluttering like spent fire,  
I come to judge between you, but a king  
Full of past days and wise from years endured.

Nor thee I praise, who art fain to undo things done:  
Nor thee, who art swift to esteem them overmuch.  
For what the hours have given is given, and this  
Changeless; howbeit these change, and in good time.  
Devise new things and good, not one thing still.  
Us have they sent now at our need for help  
Among men armed a woman, foreign born,  
Virgin, not like the natural flower of things  
That grows and bears and brings forth fruit, and dies;  
Unlovable, no light for a husband's house,  
Espoused; a glory among unwedded girls,  
And chosen of gods who reverence maidenhood.  
These too we honour in honouring her: but thou,  
Abstain thy feet from following, and thine eyes  
From amorous touch; nor set toward hers thine heart,  
Son, lest hate bear no deadlier fruit than love.

## ALTHAEA.

Oh king, thou art wise, but wisdom halts; and just,  
But the gods love not justice more than fate,  
And smite the righteous and the violent mouth,  
And mix with insolent blood the reverent man's,  
And bruise the holier as the lying lips.  
Enough; for wise words fail me, and my heart  
Takes fire and trembles flamewise, Oh my son,  
Oh child, for thine head's sake; mine eyes wax thick,  
Turning toward thee, so goodly a weaponed man,  
So glorious; and for love of thine own eyes  
They are darkened, and tears burn them, fierce as fire,  
And my lips pause and my soul sinks with love.  
But by thine hand, by thy sweet life and eyes,  
By thy great heart and these clasped knees, Oh son,  
I pray thee that thou slay me not with thee.  
For there was never a mother womanborn

Loved her sons better; and never a queen of men  
More perfect in her heart toward whom she loved.  
For what lies light on many and they forget,  
Small things and transitory as a wind o' the sea,  
I forget never; I have seen thee all thine years  
A man in arms, strong and a joy to men  
Seeing thine head glitter and thine hand burn its way  
Through: a heavy and iron furrow of sundering spears;  
But always also a flower of three suns old,  
The small one thing that lying drew down my life  
To lie with thee and feed thee; a child and weak,  
Mine, a delight to no man, sweet to me.  
Who then sought to thee? who gat help? who knew  
If thou wert goodly? nay, no man at all.  
Or what sea saw thee, or sounded with thine oar,  
Child? or what strange land shone with war through thee?  
But fair for me thou wert, Oh little life,  
Fruitless, the fruit of mine own flesh, and blind,  
More than much gold, ungrown, a foolish flower.  
For silver nor bright snow nor feather of foam  
Was whiter, and no gold yellower than thine hair,  
Oh child, my child; and now thou art lordlier grown,  
Not lovelier, nor a new thing in mine eyes,  
I charge thee by thy soul and this my breast,  
Fear thou the gods and me and thine own heart,  
Lest all these turn against thee; for who knows  
What wind upon what wave of altering time  
Shall speak a storm and blow calamity?  
And there is nothing stabile in the world  
But the gods break it; yet not less, fair son,  
If but one thing be stronger, if one endure,  
Surely the bitter and the rooted love  
That burns between us, going from me to thee,

Shall more endure than all things. What dost thou,  
Following strange loves? why wilt thou kill mine heart?  
Lo, I talk wild and windy words, and fall  
From my clear wits, and seem of mine own self  
Dethroned, dispraised, disseated; and my mind,  
That was my crown, breaks, and mine heart is gone,  
And I am naked of my soul, and stand  
Ashamed, as a mean woman; take thou thought:  
Live if thou wilt, and if thou wilt not, look,  
The gods have given thee life to lose or keep,  
Thou shalt not die as men die, but thine end  
Fallen upon thee shall break me unaware.

## MELEAGER.

Queen, my whole heart is molten with thy tears,  
And my limbs yearn with pity of thee, and love  
Compels with grief mine eyes and labouring breath:  
For what thou art I know thee, and this thy breast  
And thy fair eyes I worship, and am bound  
Toward thee in spirit and love thee in all my soul.  
For there is nothing terribler to men  
Than the sweet face of mothers, and the might.  
But what shall be, let be; for us the day  
Once only lives a little, and is not found.  
Time and the fruitful hour are more than we,  
And these lay hold upon us; but thou, God,  
Zeus, the sole steersman of the helm of things,  
Father, be swift to see us, and as thou wilt  
Help: or if adverse, as thou wilt, refrain.

## CHORUS.

We have seen thee, Oh Love, thou art fair; thou art  
goodly, Oh Love;  
Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a  
dove.

Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;  
Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.  
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire;  
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of  
desire;

And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;  
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes  
afraid;

As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath:  
But Fate is the name of her, and his name is Death.

For an evil blossom was born  
Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood,  
Blood-red and bitter of fruit,  
And the seed of it laughter and tears,  
And the leaves of it madness and scorn;  
A bitter flower from the bud,  
Sprung of the sea without root,  
Sprung without graft from the years.

The weft of the world was unton  
That is woven of the day on the night,  
The hair of the hours was not white  
Nor the raiment of time overworn,  
When a wonder, a world's delight,  
A perilous goddess was born;  
And the waves of the sea as she came  
Clove, and the foam at her feet,  
Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth  
A fleshly blossom, a flame  
Filling the heavens with heat  
To the cold white ends of the north.

And in air the clamorous birds,  
And men upon earth that hear  
Sweet articulate words  
Sweetly divided apart,  
And in shallow and channel and mere  
The rapid and footless herds,  
Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.

For all they said upon earth,  
She is fair, she is white like a dove,  
And the life of the world in her breath  
Breathes, and is born at her birth;  
For they knew thee for mother of love,  
And knew thee not mother of death.  
What hadst thou to do being born,  
Mother, when winds were at ease,  
As a flower of the springtime of corn,  
A flower of the foam of the seas?  
For bitter thou wast from thy birth,  
Aphrodite, a mother of strife;  
For before thee some rest was on earth,  
A little respite from tears,  
A little pleasure of life;  
For life was not then as thou art,  
But as one that waxeth in years  
Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife;  
Earth had no thorn, and desire  
No sting, neither death any dart;  
What hadst thou to do amongst these,  
Thou, clothed with a burning fire,  
Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,  
Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas

As an ear from a seed of corn,  
As a brand plucked forth of a pyre,  
As a ray shed forth of the morn,  
For division of soul and disease,  
For a dart and a sting and a thorn?  
What ailed thee then to be born?

Was there not evil enough,  
Mother, and anguish on earth  
Born with a man at his birth,  
Wastes underfoot, and above  
Storm out of heaven, and dearth  
Shaken down from the shining thereof,  
Wrecks from afar overseas  
And peril of shallow and firth,  
And tears that spring and increase  
In the barren places of mirth,  
That thou, having wings as a dove,  
Being girt with desire for a girth,  
That thou must come after these,  
That thou must lay on him love?

Thou shouldst not so have been born:  
But death should have risen with thee,  
Mother, and visible fear,  
Grief, and the wringing of hands,  
And noise of many that mourn;  
The smitten bosom, the knee  
Bowed, and in each man's ear  
A cry as of perishing lands,  
A moan as of people in prison,  
A tumult of infinite griefs;  
And thunder of storm on the sands,  
And wailing of wives on the shore;

And under thee newly arisen  
Loud shoals and shipwrecking reefs,  
Fierce air and violent light;  
Sail rent and sundering oar,  
Darkness, and noises of night;  
Clashing of streams in the sea,  
Wave against wave as a sword,  
Clamour of currents, and foam;  
Rains making ruin on earth,  
Winds that wax ravenous and roam  
As wolves in a wolfish horde;  
Fruits growing faint in the tree,  
And blind things dead in their birth;  
Famine, and blighting of corn,  
When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of; but thee  
Who shall discern or declare?  
In the uttermost ends of the sea  
The light of thine eyelids and hair,  
The light of thy bosom as fire  
Between the wheel of the sun  
And the flying flames of the air?  
Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity,  
But abide with despair and desire  
And the crying of armies undone,  
Lamentation of one with another  
And breaking of city by city;  
The dividing of friend against friend,  
The severing of brother and brother;  
Wilt thou utterly bring to an end?  
Have mercy, mother!

For against all men from of old  
Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,  
And cast out gods from their places.  
These things are spoken of thee.  
Strong kings and goodly with gold  
Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,  
And made their kingdoms and races  
As dust and surf of the sea.  
All these, overburdened with woes  
And with length of their days waxen weak,  
Thou slewest; and sentest more over  
Upon Tyro an evil thing,  
Rent hair and a fetter and blows  
Making bloody the flower of the cheek,  
Though she lay by a god as a lover,  
Though fair, and the seed of a king.  
For of old, being full of thy fire,  
She endured not longer to wear  
On her bosom a saffron vest,  
On her shoulder an ashwood quiver;  
Being mixed and made one through desire  
With Enipeus, and all her hair  
Made moist with his mouth, and her breast  
Filled full of the foam of the river.

## ATALANTA.

Sun, and clear light among green hills, and day  
Late risen and long sought after, and you just gods  
Whose hands divide anguish and recompense,  
But first the sun's white sister, a maid in heaven,  
On earth of all maids worshipped—hail, and hear,  
And witness with me if not without sign sent,  
Not without rule and reverence, I a maid  
Hallowed, and huntress holy as whom I serve,

Here in your sight and eyeshot of these men  
Stand, girt as they toward hunting, and my shafts  
Drawn; wherefore all ye stand up on my side,  
If I be pure and all ye righteous gods,  
Lest one revile me, a woman, yet no wife,  
That bear a spear for spindle, and this bow strung  
For a web woven; and with pure lips salute  
Heaven, and the face of all the gods, and dawn  
Filling with maiden flames and maiden flowers  
The starless fold o' the stars, and making sweet  
The warm wan heights of the air, moon-trodden ways  
And breathless gates and extreme hills of heaven.  
Whom, having offered water and bloodless gifts,  
Flowers, and a golden circlet of pure hair,  
Next Artemis I bid be favourable  
And make this day all golden, hers and ours,  
Gracious and good and white to the unblamed end.  
But thou, Oh well-beloved, of all my days  
Bid it be fruitful, and a crown for all,  
To bring forth leaves and bind round all my hair  
With perfect chaplets woven for thine of thee.  
For not without the word of thy chaste mouth,  
For not without law given and clean command,  
Across the white straits of the running sea  
From Elis even to the Acheloian horn,  
I with clear winds came hither and gentle gods,  
Far off my father's house, and left uncheered  
Iasius, and uncheered the Arcadian hills  
And all their green-haired waters, and all woods  
Disconsolate, to hear no horn of mine  
Blown, and behold no flash of swift white feet.

## MELEAGER.

For thy name's sake and awe toward thy chaste head,

Oh holiest Atalanta, no man dares  
 Praise thee, though fairer than whom all men praise,  
 And godlike for thy grace of hallowed hair  
 And holy habit of thine eyes, and feet  
 That make the blown foam neither swift nor white  
 Though the wind winnow and whirl it, yet we praise  
 Gods, found because of thee adorable  
 And for thy sake praiseworthiest from all men:  
 Thee therefore we praise also, thee as these,  
 Pure, and a light lit at the hands of gods.

TOXEUS.

How long will ye whet spears with eloquence,  
 Fight, and kill beasts dry-handed with sweet words?  
 Cease, or talk still and slay thy boars at home.

PLEXIPPUS.

Why, if she ride among us for a man,  
 Sit thou for her and spin; a man grown girl  
 Is worth a woman weaponed; sit thou here.

MELEAGER.

Peace, and be wise; no gods love idle speech.

PLEXIPPUS:

Nor any man a man's mouth woman-tongued.

MELEAGER.

For my lips bite not sharper than mine hands.

PLEXIPPUS.

Nay, both bite soft, but no whit softly mine.

MELEAGER.

Keep thine hands clean; they have time enough to stain.

PLEXIPPUS.

For thine shall rest and wax not red to-day.

MELEAGER.

Have all thy will of words; talk out thine heart.

*Swinburne, Atalanta.*

## ALTHEA.

Refrain your lips, Oh brethren, and my son,  
Lest words turn snakes and bite you uttering them.

## TOXEUS.

Except she give her blood before the gods,  
What profit shall a maid be among men?

## PLEXIPPUS.

Let her come crowned and stretch her throat for a knife,  
Bleat out her spirit and die, and so shall men  
Through her too prosper and through prosperous gods;  
But nowise through her living; shall she live  
A flower-bud of the flower-bed, or sweet fruit  
For kisses and the honey-making mouth,  
And play the shield for strong men and the spear?  
Then shall the heifer and her mate lock horns,  
And the bride overbear the groom, and men  
Gods; for no less division sunders these;  
Since all things made are seasonable in time,  
But if one alter unseasonable are all.  
But thou, Oh Zeus, hear me that I may slay  
This beast before thee and no man halve with me  
Nor woman, lest these mock thee, though a god,  
Who hast made men strong, and thou being wise be held  
Foolish; for wise is that thing which endures.

## ATALANTA.

Men, and the chosen of all this people, and thou,  
King, I beseech you, a little bear with me.  
For if my life be shameful that I live,  
Let the gods witness, and their wrath; but these  
Cast no such word against me. Thou, Oh mine,  
Oh holy, Oh happy goddess, if I sin  
Changing the words of women and the works

For spears and strange men's faces, hast not thou  
One shaft of all thy sudden seven that pierced  
Seven through the bosom or shining throat or side,  
All couched about one mother's loosening knees,  
All holy born, engraffed of Tantalus?  
But if toward any of you I am over-bold  
That take thus much upon me, let him think  
How I, for all my forest holiness,  
Fame, and this armed and iron maidenhood,  
Pay thus much also; I shall have no man's love  
Forever, and no face of children born  
Or feeding lips upon me or fastening eyes  
For ever, nor being dead shall kings my sons  
Mourn me and bury, and tears on daughters' cheeks  
Burn; but a cold and sacred life, but strange,  
But far from dances and the back-blowing torch,  
Far off from flowers or any bed of man,  
Shall my life be for ever: me the snows  
That face the first o' the morning, and cold hills  
Full of the land-wind and sea-travelling storms  
And many a wandering wing of noisy nights  
That know the thunder and hear the thickening wolves—  
Me the utmost pine and footless frost of woods  
That talk with many winds and gods, the hours  
Re-risen, and white divisions of the dawn,  
Springs thousand-tongued with the intermitting reed  
And streams that murmur of the mother snow—  
Me these allure, and know me; but no man  
Knows, and my goddess only. Lo now, see  
If one of all you these things vex at all.  
Would God that any of you had all the praise  
And I no manner of memory when I die,  
So might I show before her perfect eyes

Pure, whom I follow, a maiden to my death.  
But for the rest let all have all they will;  
For is it a grief to you that I have part,  
Being woman merely, in your male might and deeds  
Done by main strength? yet in my body is throned  
As great a heart, and in my spirit, Oh men,  
I have not less of godlike. Evil it were  
That one a coward should mix with you, one hand  
Fearful, one eye abase itself; and these  
Well might ye hate and well revile, not me.  
For not the difference of the several flesh  
Being vile or noble or beautiful or base  
Makes praiseworthy, but purer spirit and heart  
Higher than these meaner mouths and limbs, that feed,  
Rise, rest, and are and are not; and for me,  
What should I say? but by the gods of the world  
And this my maiden body, by all oaths  
That bind the tongue of men and the evil will,  
I am not mighty-minded, nor desire  
Crowns, nor the spoil of slain things nor the fame;  
Feed ye on these, eat and wax fat; cry out,  
Laugh, having eaten, and leap without a lyre,  
Sing, mix the wind with clamour, smite and shake  
Sonorous timbrels and tumultuous hair,  
And fill the dance up with tempestuous feet,  
For I will none; but having prayed my prayers  
And made thank-offering for prosperities,  
I shall go hence and no man see me more.  
What thing is this for you to shout me down,  
What, for a man to grudge me this my life  
As it were envious of all yours, and I  
A thief of reputations? nay, for now,  
If there be any highest in heaven, a god

Above all thrones and thunders of the gods  
 Throned, and the wheel of the world roll under him,  
 Judge he between me and all of you, and see  
 If I transgress at all: but ye, refrain  
 Transgressing hands and reinless mouths, and keep  
 Silence, lest by much foam of violent words  
 And proper poison of your lips ye die.

CENEUS.

Oh flower of Tegea, maiden, fleetest foot  
 And holiest head of women, have good cheer  
 Of thy good words: but ye, depart with her  
 In peace and reverence, each with blameless eye  
 Following his fate; exalt your hands and hearts,  
 Strike, cease not, arrow on arrow and wound on wound,  
 And go with gods, and with the gods return.

CHORUS.

Who hath given man speech? or who hath set therein  
 A thorn for peril and a snare for sin?  
 For in the word his life is and his breath,  
 And in the word his death,  
 That madness and the infatuate heart may breed  
 From the world's womb the deed  
 And life bring one thing forth ere all pass by,  
 Even one thing which is ours yet cannot die  
 Death. Hast thou seen him ever anywhere,  
 Time's twin-born brother, imperishable as he  
 Is perishable and plaintive, clothed with care  
 And mutable as sand,  
 But death is strong and full of blood and fair  
 And perdurable and like a lord of land?  
 Nay, time thou seest not, death thou wilt not see  
 Till life's right hand be loosened from thine hand  
 And thy life-days from thee,

For the gods very subtly fashion  
    Madness with sadness upon earth:  
Not knowing in any wise compassion,  
    Nor holding pity of any worth;  
And many things they have given and taken,  
    And wrought and ruined many things;  
The firm land have they loosed and shaken,  
    And sealed the sea with all her springs;  
They have wearied time with heavy burdens  
    And vexed the lips of life with breath:  
Set men to labour and given them guerdons,  
    Death, and great darkness after death:  
Put moans into the bridal measure  
    And on the bridal wools a stain;  
And circled pain about with pleasure,  
    And girdled pleasure about with pain;  
And strewed one marriage-bed with tears and fire  
    For extreme loathing and supreme desire.

What shall be done with all these tears of ours?  
    Shall they make water-springs in the fair heaven  
To bathe the brows of morning? or like flowers  
    Be shed and shine before the starriest hours,  
Or made the raiment of the weeping Seven?  
Or rather, Oh our masters, shall they be  
Food for the famine of the grievous sea,  
    A great well-head of lamentation  
Satiating the sad gods? or fall and flow  
    Among the years and seasons to and fro,  
And wash their feet with tribulation  
    And fill them full with grieving ere they go?  
Alas, our lords, and yet alas again,

Seeing all your iron heaven is gilt as gold  
But all we smite thereat in vain;  
Smite the gates barred with groanings manifold,  
But all the floors are paven with our pain.  
Yea, and with weariness of lips and eyes,  
With breaking of the bosom, and with sighs,  
We labour, and are clad and fed with grief  
And filled with days we would not fain behold  
And nights we would not hear of; we wax old,  
All we wax old and wither like a leaf  
We are outcast, strayed between bright sun and moon;  
Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers,  
Black flowers and white, that perish; and the noon  
As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.  
A little fruit a little while is ours,  
And the worm finds it soon.

But up in heaven the high gods one by one  
Lay hands upon the draught that quickeneth,  
Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things done,  
And stir with soft imperishable breath  
The bubbling bitterness of life and death,  
And hold it to our lips, and laugh; but they  
Preserve their lips from tasting night or day,  
Lest they too change and sleep, the fates that spun,  
The lips that made us and the hands that slay;  
Lest all these change, and heaven bow down to none,  
Change and be subject to the secular sway  
And terrene revolution of the sun.  
Therefore they thrust it from them, putting time away.

I would the wine of time, made sharp and sweet  
With multitudinous days and nights and tears

And many mixing savours of strange years,  
Were no more trodden of them under feet,  
Cast out and spilt about their holy places:  
That life were given them as a fruit to eat  
And death to drink as water; that the light  
Might ebb, drawn backward from their eyes, and night  
Hide for one hour the imperishable faces.  
That they might rise up sad in heaven, and know  
Sorrow and sleep, one paler than young snow,  
One cold as blight of dew and ruinous rain;  
Rise up and rest and suffer a little, and be  
Awhile as all things born with us and we,  
And grieve as men, and like slain men be slain.

For now we know not of them; but one saith  
The gods are gracious, praising God; and one,  
When hast thou seen? or hast thou felt his breath  
Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,  
Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death?  
None hath beheld him, none  
Seen above other gods and shapes of things,  
Swift without feet and flying without wings,  
Intolerable, not clad with death or life,  
Insatiable, not known of night or day,  
The lord of love and loathing and of strife,  
Who gives a star, and takes a sun away;  
Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife  
To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay;  
Who turns the large limbs to a little flame  
And binds the great sea with a little sand;  
Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame;  
Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand;  
Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,

Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,  
Smites without sword, and scourges without rod;  
The supreme evil, God.

Yea, with thine hate, Oh God, thou hast covered us,  
One saith, and hidden our eyes away from sight,  
And made us transitory and hazardous,  
Light things and slight;

Yet have men praised thee, saying, He hath made man thus,  
And he doeth right.

Thou hast kissed us, and hast smitten; thou hast laid  
Upon us with thy left hand life, and said,  
Live: and again thou hast said, Yield up your breath,  
And with thy right hand laid upon us death.

Thou hast sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with dreams,  
Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be;

Thou hast made sweet springs for all the pleasant streams,  
In the end thou hast made them bitter with the sea.

Thou hast fed one rose with dust of many men;  
Thou hast marred one face with fire of many tears;

Thou hast taken love, and given us sorrow again;  
With pain thou hast filled us full to the eyes and ears.

Therefore because thou art strong, our father, and we  
Feeble; and thou art against us, and thine hand  
Constrains us in the shallows of the sea

And breaks us at the limits of the land;  
Because thou hast bent thy lightnings as a bow,

And loosed the hours like arrows; and let fall  
Sins and wild words and many a wingèd woe

And wars among us, and one end of all;

Because thou hast made the thunder, and thy feet  
Are as a rushing water when the skies

Break, but thy face as an exceeding heat,

And flames of fire the eyelids of thine eyes;

Because thou art over all who are over us;  
Because thy name is life, and our name death;  
Because thou art cruel and men are piteous,  
And our hands labour, and thine hand scattereth;  
Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,  
Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,  
At least we witness of thee ere we die  
That these things are not otherwise, but thus;  
That each man in his heart sigheth, and saith,  
That all men even as I,  
All we are against thee, against thee, Oh God most high.  
But ye, keep ye on earth  
Your lips from over-speech,  
Loud words and longing are so little worth;  
And the end is hard to reach.  
For silence after grievous things is good,  
And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,  
And shame, and righteous governance of blood,  
And lordship of the soul.  
But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,  
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root;  
For words divide and rend;  
But silence is most noble till the end.

#### ALTHEA.

I heard within the house a cry of news,  
And came forth eastward hither, where the dawn  
Cheers first these warder gods that face the sun  
And next our eyes unrisen; for unaware  
Came clashes of swift hoofs and trampling feet,  
And through the windy pillared corridor  
Light sharper than the frequent flames of day  
That daily fill it from the fiery dawn;  
Gleams, and a thunder of people that cried out,

And dust and hurrying horsemen; lo their chief,  
That rode with Eneus rein by rein, returned.  
What cheer, Oh herald of my lord the king?

HERALD.

Lady, good cheer and great; the boar is slain.

CHORUS.

Praised be all gods that look toward Calydon.

ALTHÆA.

Good news and brief; but by whose happier hand?

HERALD.

A maiden's and a prophet's and thy son's.

ALTHÆA.

Well fare the spear that severed him and life.

HERALD.

Thine own, and not an alien, hast thou blest.

ALTHÆA.

Twice be thou too for my sake blest and his.

HERALD.

At the king's word I rode afoam for thine.

ALTHÆA.

Thou sayest he tarrieth till they bring the spoil?

HERALD.

Hard by the quarry, where they breathe, Oh queen.

ALTHÆA.

Speak thou their chance; but some bring flowers, and  
crown

These gods and all the lintel, and shed wine,  
Fetch sacrifice and slay; for Heaven is good.

HERALD.

Some furlongs northward where the brakes begin,  
West of that narrowing range of warrior hills  
Whose brooks have bled with battle when thy son  
Smote Acarnania, there all they made halt,

And with keen eye took note of spear and hound,  
Royally ranked; Laertes island-born,  
The young Gerenian Nestor, Panopeus,  
And Cepheus and Aincæus, mightiest thewed,  
Arcadians; next, and evil-eyed of these,  
Arcadian Atalanta, with twain hounds  
Lengthening the leash, and under nose and brow  
Glittering with lipless tooth and fire-swift eye;  
But from her white braced shoulder the plumed shafts  
Rang, and the bow shone from her side; next her  
Meleager, like a sun in spring that strikes  
Branch into leaf and bloom into the world,  
A glory among men meaner; Iphicles,  
And following him that slew the biform bull  
Pirithous, and divine Eurytion,  
And, bride-bound to the gods, Æacides;  
Then Telamon his brother, and Argive-born  
The seer and sayer of visions and of truth,  
Amphiaraus; and a fourfold strength,  
Thine, even thy mother's and thy sister's sons;  
And recent from the roar of foreign foam  
Jason, and Dryas twin-begot with war,  
A blossom of bright battle, sword and man  
Shining; and Idas, and the keenest eye  
Of Lynceus, and Admetus twice-espoused,  
And Hippasus and Hyleus, great in heart.  
These having halted bade blow horns, and rode  
Through woods and waste lands cleft by stormy streams,  
Past yew-trees and the heavy hair of pines,  
And where the dew is thickest under oaks,  
This way and that; but questing up and down  
They saw no trail, nor scented; and one said,  
Plexippus, Help, or help not, Artemis,

And we will flay thy boar-skin with male hands;  
But saying, he ceased and said not that he would,  
Seeing where the green ooze of a sun-struck marsh  
Shook with a thousand reeds untunable,  
And in their moist and multitudinous flower  
Slept no soft sleep, with violent visions fed,  
The blind bulk of the immeasurable beast.  
And seeing, he shuddered with sharp lust of praise  
Through all his limbs, and launched a double dart,  
And missed; for much desire divided him,  
Too hot of spirit and feebler than his will,  
That his hand failed, though fervent; and the shaft,  
Sundering the rushes, in a tamarisk stem  
Shook, and stuck fast. Then all abode save one,  
The Arcadian Atalanta; from her side  
Sprang her hounds, labouring at the leash, and slipped,  
And plashed ear-deep with plunging feet; but she,  
Saying, Speed it as I send it for thy sake,  
Goddess, drew bow and loosed; the sudden string  
Rang, and sprang inward, and the waterish air  
Hissed, and the moist plumes of the songless reeds  
Moved as a wave which the wind moves no more.  
But the boar heaved half out of ooze and slime  
His tense flank trembling round the barbèd wound,  
Hateful; and fiery with invasive eyes  
And bristling with intolerable hair  
Plunged, and the hounds clung, and green flowers and  
white  
Reddened and broke all round them where they came.  
And charging with sheer tusk he drove, and smote  
Hyleus; and sharp death caught his sudden soul,  
And violent sleep shed night upon his eyes.  
Then Peleus, with strong strain of hand and heart,

Shot; but the sidelong arrow slid, and slew  
His comrade born and loving countryman,  
Under the left arm smitten, as he no less  
Poised a like arrow; and bright blood brake afoam,  
And falling, and weighed back by clamorous arms,  
Sharp rang the dead limbs of Eurytion.  
Then one shot happier, the Cadmean seer,  
Amphiaraus; for his sacred shaft  
Pierced the red circlet of one ravening eye  
Beneath the brute brows of the sanguine boar,  
Now bloodier from one slain; but he so galled  
Sprang straight, and rearing cried no lesser cry  
Than thunder and the roar of wintering streams  
That mix their own foam with the yellower sea;  
And as a tower that falls by fire in fight  
With ruin of walls and all its archery,  
And breaks the iron flower of war beneath,  
Crushing charred limbs and molten arms of men;  
So through crushed branches and the reddening brake  
Clamoured and crashed the fervour of his feet,  
And trampled, springing sideways from the tusk,  
Too tardy a moving mould of heavy strength,  
Ancæus; and as flakes of weak-winged snow  
Break, all the hard thews of his heaving limbs  
Broke, and rent flesh fell every way, and blood  
Flew, and fierce fragments of no more a man.  
Then all the heroes drew sharp breath, and gazed,  
And smote not; but Meleager, but thy son,  
Right in the wild way of the coming curse  
Rock-rooted, fair with fierce and fastened lips,  
Clear eyes, and springing muscle and shortening limb—  
With chin aslant indrawn to a tightening throat,  
Grave, and with gathered sinews, like a god,—

Aimed on the left side his well-handled spear  
Grasped where the ash was knottiest hewn, and smote,  
And with no missile wound, the monstrous boar  
Right in the hairiest hollow of his hide  
Under the last rib, sheer through bulk and bone,  
Deep in; and deeply smitten, and to death,  
The heavy horror with his hanging shafts  
Leapt, and fell furiously, and from raging lips  
Foamed out the latest wrath of all his life.  
And all they praised the gods with mightier heart,  
Zeus and all gods, but chiefliest Artemis,  
Seeing; but Meleager bade whet knives and flay,  
Strip and stretch out the splendour of the spoil;  
And hot and horrid from the work all these  
Sat, and drew breath, and drank and made great cheer,  
And washed the hard sweat off their calmer brows.  
For much sweet grass grew higher than grew the reed,  
And good for slumber, and every holier herb,  
Narcissus, and the low-lying melilot,  
And all of goodliest blade and bloom that springs  
Where, hid by heavier hyacinth, violet buds  
Blossom and burn; and fire of yellower flowers  
And light of crescent lilies, and such leaves  
As fear the Faun's and know the Dryad's foot;  
Olive and ivy and poplar dedicate,  
And many a wellspring over-watched of these.  
There now they rest; but me the king bade bear  
Good tidings to rejoice this town and thee.  
Wherefore be glad, and all ye give much thanks,  
For fallen is all the trouble of Calydon.

## ALTHAEA.

Laud ye the gods; for this they have given is good,  
And what shall be they hide until their time.

Much good and somewhat grievous hast thou said,  
And either well; but let all sad things be,  
Till all have made before the prosperous gods  
Burnt-offering, and poured out the floral wine.  
Look fair, Oh gods, and favourable; for we  
Praise you with no false heart or flattering mouth,  
Being merciful, but with pure souls and prayer.

HERALD.

Thou hast prayed well; for whoso fears not these,  
But once being prosperous waxes huge of heart,  
Him shall some new thing unaware destroy.

CHORUS.

Oh that I now, I too were  
By deep wells and water-floods,  
Streams of ancient hills, and where  
All the wan green places bear  
Blossoms cleaving to the sod,  
Fruitless fruit, and grasses fair,  
Or such darkest ivy-buds  
As divide thy yellow hair,  
Bacchus, and their leaves that nod  
Round thy fawnskin brush the bare  
Snow-soft shoulders of a god;  
There the year is sweet, and there  
Earth is full of secret springs,  
And the fervent rose-cheeked hours,  
Those that marry dawn and noon,  
There are sunless, there look pale  
In dim leaves and hidden air,  
Pale as grass or latter flowers  
Or the wild vine's wan wet rings  
Full of dew beneath the moon,  
And all day the nightingale

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Sleeps, and all night sings;  
There in cold remote recesses  
That nor alien eyes assail,  
Feet, nor imminence of wings,  
Nor a wind nor any tune,  
Thou, Oh queen and holiest,  
Flower the whitest of all things,  
With reluctant lengthening tresses  
And with sudden splendid breast  
Save of maidens unbeholden,  
There art wont to enter, there  
Thy divine swift limbs and golden  
Maiden growth of unbound hair,  
Bathed in waters white,  
Shine, and many a maid's by thee  
In moist woodland or the hilly  
Flowerless brakes where wells abound  
Out of all men's sight;  
Or in lower pools that see  
All their marges clothed all round  
With the innumerable lily,  
Whence the golden-girdled bee  
Flits through flowering rush to fret  
White or duskier violet,  
Fair as those that in far years  
With their buds left luminous  
And their little leaves made wet,  
From the warmer dew of tears,  
Mother's tears in extreme need,  
Hid the limbs of Iamus,  
Of thy brother's seed;  
For his heart was piteous  
Toward him, even as thine heart now

*Swinburne, Atalanta.*

Pitiful toward us;  
Thine, Oh goddess, turning hither  
A benignant blameless brow;  
Seeing enough of evil done  
And lives withered as leaves wither  
In the blasting of the sun;  
Seeing enough of hunters dead,  
Ruin enough of all our year,  
Herds and harvests slain and shed,  
Herdsmen stricken many an one,  
Fruits and flocks consumed together,  
And great length of deadly days.  
Yet with reverent lips and fear  
Turn we toward thee, turn and praise  
For this lightening of clear weather  
And prosperities begun.  
For not seldom, when all air  
As bright water without breath  
Shines, and when men fear not, fate  
Without thunder unaware  
Breaks, and brings down death.  
Joy with grief ye great gods give,  
Good with bad, and overbear  
All the pride of us that live,  
All the high estate,  
As ye long since overbore,  
As in old time long before,  
Many a strong man and a great,  
All that were.  
But do thou, sweet, otherwise,  
Having heed of all our prayer,  
Taking note of all our sighs;  
We beseech thee by thy light,

By thy bow, and thy sweet eyes,  
 And the kingdom of the night,  
 Be thou favourable and fair;  
 By thine arrows and thy might  
 And Orion overthrown;  
 By the maiden thy delight,  
 By the indissoluble zone  
 And the sacred hair.

MESSENGER.

Maidens, if ye will sing now, shift your song,  
 Bow down, cry, wail for pity; is this a time  
 For singing? nay, for strewing of dust and ash,  
 Rent raiment, and for bruising of the breast.

CHORUS.

What new thing wolf-like lurks behind thy words?  
 What snake's tongue in thy lips? what fire in the eyes?

MESSENGER.

Bring me before the queen, and I will speak.

CHORUS.

Lo, she comes forth as from thank-offering made.

MESSENGER.

A barren offering for a bitter gift.

ALTHEA.

What are these borne on branches, and the face  
 Covered? no mean men living, but now slain  
 Such honour have they, if any dwell with death.

MESSENGER.

Queen, thy twain brethren and thy mother's sons.

ALTHEA.

Lay down your dead till I behold their blood  
 If it be mine indeed, and I will weep.

MESSENGER.

Weep if thou wilt, for these men shall no more.

ALTHEA.

Oh brethren, Oh my father's sons, of me  
Well loved and well reputed, I should weep  
Tears dearer than the dear blood drawn from you  
But that I know you not uncomforted,  
Sleeping no shameful sleep, however slain,  
For my son surely hath avenged you dead.

MESSENGER.

Nay, should thine own seed slay himself, Oh queen?

ALTHEA.

Thy double word brings forth a double death.

MESSENGER.

Know this then singly, by one hand they fell.

ALTHEA.

What mutterest thou with thine ambiguous mouth?

MESSENGER.

Slain by thy son's hand; is that saying so hard?

ALTHEA.

Our time is come upon us: it is here.

CHORUS.

Oh miserable, and spoiled at thine own hand.

ALTHEA.

Wert thou not called Meleager from this womb?

CHORUS.

A grievous huntsman hath it bred to thee.

ALTHEA.

Wert thou born fire, and shalt thou not devour?

CHORUS.

The fire thou madest, will it consume even thee?

ALTHEA.

My dreams are fallen upon me: burn thou too.

CHORUS.

Not without God are visions born and die.

ALTHÆA.

The gods are many about me; I am one.

CHORUS.

She groans as men wrestling with heavier gods.

ALTHÆA.

They rend me, they divide me, they destroy.

CHORUS.

Or one labouring in travail of strange births.

ALTHÆA.

They are strong, they are strong; I am broken, and these prevail.

CHORUS.

The god is great against her: she will die.

ALTHÆA.

Yea, but not now; for my heart too is great.

I would I were not here in sight of the sun.

But thou, speak all thou sawest, and I will die.

MESSENGER.

Oh queen, for queenlike hast thou borne thyself,  
A little word may hold so great mischance.  
For, in division of the sanguine spoil,  
These men thy brethren wrangling bade yield up  
The boar's head and the horror of the hide,  
That this might stand a wonder in Calydon,  
Hallowed; and some drew toward them; but thy son,  
With great hands grasping all that weight of hair  
Cast down the dead heap clanging and collapsed  
At female feet, saying This thy spoil, not mine,  
Maiden, thine own hand for thyself hath reaped,  
And all this praise God gives thee: she thereat  
Laughed, as when dawn touches the sacred night  
The sky sees laugh and reddens and divide  
Dim lips and eyelids virgin of the sun,

Hers, and the warm slow breasts of morning heave,  
Fruitful, and flushed with flame from lamp-lit hours,  
And maiden undulation of clear hair  
Colour the clouds; so laughed she from pure heart  
Lit with a low blush to the braided hair,  
And rose-coloured and cold like very dawn,  
Golden and godlike, chastely with chaste lips,  
A faint grave laugh; and all they held their peace,  
And she passed by them. Then one cried Lo now,  
Shall not the Arcadian shoot out lips at us,  
Saying all we were despoiled by this one girl?  
And all they rode against her violently  
And cast the fresh crown from her hair, and now  
They had rent her spoil away, dishonouring her,  
Save that Meleager, as a tame lion chafed,  
Bore on them, broke them, and as fire cleaves wood  
So clove and drove them, smitten in twain; but she  
Smote not nor heaved up hand; and this man first,  
Plexippus, crying out This for love's sake, sweet,  
Drove at Meleager, who with spear straightening  
Pierced his cheek through; then Toxeus made for him,  
Dumb, but his spear spake; vain and violent words,  
Fruitless; for him too, stricken through both sides  
The earth felt falling, and his horse's foam  
Blanched thy son's face, his slayer; And these being slain,  
None moved nor spake; but Æneus bade bear hence  
These made of heaven infatuate in their deaths,  
Foolish; for these would baffle fate, and fell.  
And they passed on, and all men honoured her,  
Being honourable, as one revered of heaven.

## ALTHEA.

What say you, women? is all this not well done?

## CHORUS.

No man doth well but God hath part in him.

## ALTHEA.

But no part here; for these my brethren born  
Ye have no part in, these ye know not of  
As I that was their sister, a sacrifice  
Slain in their slaying. I would I had died for these;  
For this man dead walked with me, child by child,  
And made a weak staff for my feebler feet  
With his own tender wrist and hand, and held  
And led me softly, and showed me gold and steel  
And shining shapes of mirror and bright crown,  
And all things fair; and threw light spears, and brought  
Young hounds to huddle at my feet and thrust  
Tame heads against my little maiden breasts  
And please me with great eyes; and those days went  
And these are bitter and I a barren queen  
And sister miserable, a grievous thing,  
And mother of many curses; and she too,  
My sister Leda, sitting overseas  
With fair fruits round her, and her faultless lord,  
Shall curse me, saying A sorrow and not a son,  
Sister, thou barest, even a burning fire,  
A brand consuming thine own soul and me.  
But ye now, sons of Thestius, make good cheer,  
For ye shall have such wood to funeral fire  
As no king hath; and flame that once burnt down  
Oil shall not quicken or breath relume, or wine  
Refresh again; much costlier than fine gold,  
And more than many lives of wandering men.

## CHORUS.

Oh queen, thou hast yet with thee love-worthy things,  
Thine husband, and the great strength of thy son.

## ALTHEA.

Who shall get brothers for me while I live?  
Who bear them? who bring forth in lieu of these?  
Are not our fathers and our brethren one,  
And no man like them? are not mine here slain?  
Have we not hung together, he and I,  
Flowerwise feeding as the feeding bees,  
With mother-milk for honey? and this man too,  
Dead, with my son's spear thrust between his sides,  
Hath he not seen us, later born than he,  
Laugh with lips filled, and laughed again for love?  
There were no sons then in the world, nor spears,  
Nor deadly births of women; but the gods  
Allowed us, and our days were clear of these.  
I would I had died unwedded, and brought forth  
No swords to vex the world; for these that spake  
Sweet words long since, and loved me will not speak  
Nor love nor look upon me; and all my life  
I shall not hear nor see them living men.  
But I too living, how shall I now live?  
What life shall this be with my son, to know  
What hath been, and desire what will not be,  
Look for dead eyes and listen for dead lips,  
And kill mine own heart with remembering them,  
And with those eyes that see their slayer alive  
Weep, and wring hands that clasp him by the hand?  
How shall I bear my dreams of them, to hear  
False voices, feel the kisses of false mouths  
And footless sound of perished feet, and then  
Wake and hear only it may be their own hounds  
Whine masterless in miserable sleep,  
And see their boar-spears and their beds and seats  
And all the gear and housings of their lives

And not the men? Shall hounds and horses mourn,  
Pine with strange eyes, and prick up hungry ears,  
Famish and fail at heart for their dear lords,  
And I not heed at all? and those blind things  
Fall off from life for love's sake, and I live?  
Surely some death is better than some life,  
Better one death for him and these and me  
For, if the gods had slain them, it may be  
I had endured it; if they had fallen by war  
Or by the nets and knives of privy death  
And by hired hands while sleeping, this thing too  
I had set my soul to suffer; or this hunt,  
Had this despatched them, under tusk or tooth  
Torn, sanguine, trodden, broken; for all deaths  
Or honourable or with facile feet avenged  
And hands of swift gods following, all save this,  
Are bearable; but not for their sweet land  
Fighting, but not a sacrifice, lo these  
Dead; for I had not then shed all mine heart  
Out at mine eyes: then either with good speed,  
Being just, I had slain their slayer atoningly,  
Or strewn with flowers their fire and on their tombs  
Hung crowns, and over them a song, and seen  
Their praise outflame their ashes: for all men,  
All maidens, had come thither, and from pure lips  
Shed songs upon them, from heroic eyes  
Tears; and their death had been a deathless life;  
But now, by no man hired nor alien sword,  
By their own kindred are they fallen, in peace,  
After much peril, friendless among friends,  
By hateful hands they loved; and how shall mine  
Touch these returning red and not from war,  
These fatal from the vintage of men's veins,

Dead men my brethren? how shall these wash off  
No festal stains of undelightful wine,  
How mix the blood, my blood on them, with me,  
Holding mine hand? or how shall I say, son,  
That am no sister? but by night and day  
Shall we not sit and hate each other, and think  
Things hate-worthy? not live with shamefast eyes,  
Brow-beaten, treading soft with fearful feet,  
Each unupbraided, each without rebuke  
Convicted, and without a word reviled  
Each of another? and I shall let thee live  
And see thee strong and hear men for thy sake  
Praise me, but these thou wouldest not let live  
No man shall praise for ever? these shall lie  
Dead, unbeloved, unholpen, all through thee?  
Sweet were they toward me living, and mine heart  
Desired them, but was then well satisfied,  
That now is as men hungered; and these dead  
I shall want always to the day I die.  
For all things else and all men may renew;  
Yea, son for son the gods may give and take,  
But never a brother or sister any more.

#### CHORUS.

Nay, for the son lies close about thine heart,  
Full of thy milk, warm from thy womb, and drains  
Life and the blood of life, and all thy fruit,  
Eats thee and drinks thee as who breaks bread and eats,  
Treads wine and drinks, thyself, a sect of thee;  
And if he feed not, shall not thy flesh faint?  
Or drink not, are not thy lips dead for thirst?  
This thing moves more than all things, even thy son,  
That thou cleave to him; and he shall honour thee,

Thy womb that bare him and the breasts he knew,  
Reverencing most for thy sake all his gods.

## ALTHEA.

But these the gods too gave me, and these my son,  
Not reverencing his gods nor mine own heart  
Nor the old sweet years nor all venerable things,  
But cruel, and in his ravin like a beast,  
Hath taken away to slay them; yea, and she,  
She the strange woman, she the flower, the sword,  
Red from spilt blood, a mortal flower to men,  
Adorable, detestable—even she  
Saw with strange eyes, and with strange lips rejoiced,  
Seeing these mine own slain of mine own, and me  
Made miserable above all miseries made,  
A grief among all women in the world,  
A name to be washed out with all men's tears.

## CHORUS.

Strengthen thy spirit; is this not also a god,  
Chance, and the wheel of all necessities?  
Hard things have fallen upon us from harsh gods,  
Whom lest worse hap rebuke we not for these.

## ALTHEA.

My spirit is strong against itself, and I  
For these things' sake cry out on mine own soul  
That it endures outrage, and dolorous days,  
And life, and this inexpiable impotence.  
Weak am I, weak and shameful; my breath drawn  
Shames me, and monstrous things and violent gods.  
What shall atone? what heal me? what bring back  
Strength to the foot, light to the face? what herb  
Assuage me? what restore me? what release?  
What strange thing eaten or drunken, Oh great gods,  
Make me as you or as the beasts that feed,

Slay and divide and cherish their own hearts?  
For these ye show us; and we less than these  
Have not wherewith to live as all these things  
Which all their lives fare after their own kind  
As who doth well rejoicing; but we ill,  
Weeping or laughing, we whom eyesight fails,  
Knowledge and light of face and perfect heart,  
And hands we lack, and wit; and all our days  
Sin, and have hunger, and die infatuated.  
For madness have ye given us and not health,  
And sins whereof we know not; and for these  
Death, and sudden destruction, unaware.  
What shall we say now? what thing comes of us?

CHORUS.

Alas, for all this all men undergo.

ALTHÆA.

Wherefore I will not that these twain, Oh gods,  
Die as a dog dies, eaten of creeping things,  
Abominable, a loathing; but though dead  
Shall they have honour and such funereal flame  
As strews men's ashes in their enemies' face,  
And blinds their eyes who hate them: lest men say,  
"Lo how they lie, and living had great kin;  
And none of these hath pity of them, and none  
Regards them lying, and none is wrung at heart,  
None moved in spirit for them, naked and slain,  
Abhorred, abased, and no tears comfort them;"  
And in the dark this grieve Eurythemis,  
Hearing how these her sons come down to her  
Unburied, unavenged, as kinless men,  
And had a queen their sister. That were shame  
Worse than this grief. Yet how to atone at all  
I know not; seeing the love of my born son,

A new-made mother's new-born love, that grows  
From the soft child to the strong man, now soft,  
Now strong as either, and still one sole same love,  
Strives with me, no light thing to strive withal;  
This love is deep, and natural to man's blood,  
And ineffaceable with many tears.

Yet shall not these rebuke me though I die,  
Nor she in that waste world with all her dead,  
My mother, among the pale flocks fallen as leaves,  
Folds of dead people, and alien from the sun;  
Nor lack some bitter comfort, some poor praise,  
Being queen, to have borne her daughter like a queen,  
Righteous; and though mine own fire burn me too,  
She shall have honour and these her sons, though dead.  
But all the gods will, all they do, and we  
Not all we would, yet somewhat; and one choice  
We have, to live and do just deeds and die.

CHORUS.

Terrible words she communes with, and turns  
Swift fiery eyes in doubt against herself,  
And murmurs as who talks in dreams with death.

ALTHEA.

For the unjust also dieth, and him all men  
Hate, and himself abhors the unrighteousness,  
And seeth his own dishonour intolerable.  
But I being just, doing right upon myself,  
Slay mine own soul, and no man born shames me.  
For none constrains nor shall rebuke, being done,  
What none compelled me doing; thus these things fare.  
Ah, ah, that such things should so fare; ah me,  
That I am found to do them and endure,  
Chosen and constrained to choose, and bear myself  
Mine own wound through mine own flesh to the heart

Violently stricken, a spoiler and a spoil,  
A ruin ruinous, fallen on mine own son.  
Ah, ah, for me too as for these; alas,  
For that is done that shall be, and mine hand  
Full of the deed, and full of blood mine eyes,  
That shall see never nor touch anything  
Save blood unstanch'd and fire unquenchable.

CHORUS.

What wilt thou do? what ails thee? for the house  
Shakes ruinously; wilt thou bring fire for it?

ALTHEA.

Fire in the roofs, and on the lintels fire.  
Lo ye, who stand and weave, between the doors,  
There; and blood drips from hand and thread, and stains  
Threshold and raiment and me passing in  
Flecked with the sudden sanguine drops of death.

CHORUS.

Alas that time is stronger than strong men,  
Fate than all gods: and these are fallen on us.

ALTHEA.

A little since, and I was glad; and now  
I never shall be glad or sad again.

CHORUS.

Between two joys a grief grows unaware.

ALTHEA.

A little while and I shall laugh; and then  
I shall weep never and laugh not any more.

CHORUS.

What shall be said? for words are thorns to grief.  
Withhold thyself a little and fear the gods.

ALTHEA.

Fear died when these were slain; and I am as dead,  
And fear is of the living; these fear none.

Chorus

Have pity upon all people for their sin;

Ante-chorus

It is done now; shall I put back my fire?

Chorus

An end is come, an end fire is of God;

Ante-chorus

I am fire, and burn myself away clear of fire;

Chorus

The house is broken, is broken; I shall not stand;

Ante-chorus

Woe, woe for him that breaketh; and I did  
Smote it of old, and now the axe is here.

Chorus

Not as with sundering of the earth;

Nor as with cleaving of the sea;

Nor fierce foreshadowings of a birth;

Nor flying dreams of death to be;

Nor loosening of the large world's girth;

And quickening of the body of night;

And sound of thunder in men's ears;

And fire of lightning in men's sight;

Fate, mother of desires and fears,

Bore unto men the law of tears;

But sudden, an unfathered flame,

And broken out of night, she shone,

She, without body, without name,

In days forgotten and foregone;

And heaven rang round her as she came

Like smitten cymbals, and lay bare;

Clouds and great stars, thunders and snows,

The blue sad fields and folds of air,  
The life that breathes, the life that grows,  
All wind, all fire, that burns or blows,  
Even all these knew her: for she is great;  
The daughter of doom, the mother of death,  
The sister of sorrow; a lifelong weight  
That no man's finger lighteneth,  
Nor any god can lighten fate;  
A landmark seen across the way  
Where one race treads as the other trod;  
An evil sceptre, an evil stay,  
Wrought for a staff, wrought for a rod,  
The bitter jealousy of God.

For death is deep as the sea,  
And fate as the waves thereof.  
Shall the waves take pity on thee,  
Or the south-wind offer thee love?  
Wilt thou take the night for thy day  
Or the darkness for light on the way,  
Till thou say in thine heart Enough?  
Behold, thou art over fair, thou art over wise;  
The sweetness of spring in thine hair, and the light in  
thine eyes.  
The light of the spring in thine eyes, and the sound in  
thine ears;  
Yet thine heart shall wax heavy with sighs and thine eye-  
lids with tears.  
Wilt thou cover thine hair with gold, and with silver thy  
feet?  
Hast thou taken the purple to fold thee, and made thy  
mouth sweet?

Behold, when thy face is made bare, he that loved thee  
shall hate;

Thy face shall be no more fair at the fall of thy fate.  
For thy life shall fall as a leaf and be shed as the rain;  
And the veil of thine head shall be grief; and the crown  
shall be pain.

## ALTHÆA.

Ho, ye that wail, and ye that sing, make way  
Till I be come among you. Hide your tears,  
Ye little weepers, and your laughing lips,  
Ye laughers for a little; lo mine eyes.  
That outweep heaven at rainiest, and my mouth  
That laughs as gods laugh at us. Fate's are we,  
Yet fate is ours a breathing-space; yea, mine,  
Fate is made mine for ever; he is my son,  
My bedfellow, my brother. You strong gods,  
Give place unto me; I am as any of you,  
To give life and to take life. Thou, old earth,  
That hast made man and unmade; thou whose mouth  
Looks red from the eaten fruits of thine own womb;  
Behold me with what lips upon what food  
I feed and fill my body; even with flesh  
Made of my body. Lo, the fire I lit  
I burn with fire to quench it; yea, with flame  
I burn up even the dust and ash thereof.

## CHORUS.

Woman, what fire is this thou burnest with?

## ALTHÆA.

Yea to the bone, yea to the blood and all.

## CHORUS.

For this thy face and hair are as one fire.

## ALTHÆA.

A tongue that licks and beats upon the dust.

*Swinburne, Atalanta.*

## CHORUS.

And in thine eyes are hollow light and heat.

ALTHÆA.

Of flame not fed with hand or frankincense.

CHORUS.

I fear thee for the trembling of thine eyes.

ALTHÆA.

Neither with love they tremble, nor for fear.

CHORUS.

And thy mouth shuddering like a shot bird.

ALTHÆA.

Not as the bride's mouth when man kisses it.

CHORUS.

Nay, but what thing is this thing thou hast done?

ALTHÆA.

Look, I am silent, speak your eyes for me.

CHORUS.

I see a faint fire lightening from the hall.

ALTHÆA.

Gaze, stretch your eyes, strain till the lids drop off.

CHORUS.

Flushed pillars down the flickering vestibule.

ALTHÆA.

Stretch with your necks like birds: cry, chirp as they.

CHORUS.

And a long brand that blackens: and white dust.

ALTHÆA.

Oh children, what is this ye see? your eyes  
Are blinder than night's face at fall of moon.

That is my son, my flesh, my fruit of life,  
My travail, and the year's weight of my womb,  
Meleager, a fire enkindled of mine hands  
And of mine hands extinguished; this is he.

## CHORUS.

Oh gods, what word has flown out at thy mouth?

## ALTHAEA.

I did this and I say this and I die.

## CHORUS.

Death stands upon the doorway of thy lips,  
And in thy mouth has death set up his house.

## ALTHAEA.

Oh death, a little, a little while, sweet death,  
Until I see the brand burnt down and die.

## CHORUS.

She reels as any reed under the wind,  
And cleaves unto the ground with staggering feet.

## ALTHAEA.

Girls, one thing will I say and hold my peace.  
I that did this will weep not nor cry out,  
Cry ye and weep: I will not call on gods,  
Call ye on them; I will not pity man,  
Show ye your pity. I know not if I live;  
Save that I feel the fire upon my face  
And on my cheek the burning of a brand.  
• Yea, the smoke bites me, yea, I drink the steam  
With nostril and with eyelid and with lip  
Insatiate and intolerant; and mine hands  
Burn, and fire feeds upon mine eyes; I reel  
As one made drunk with living, whence he draws  
Drunken delight; yet I, though mad for joy,  
Loathe my long living, and am waxen red  
As with the shadow of shed blood; behold,  
I am kindled with the flames that fade in him,  
I am swollen with subsiding of his veins,  
I am flooded with his ebbing; my lit eyes

Flame with the falling fire that leaves his lids  
Bloodless; my cheek is luminous with blood  
Because his face is ashen. Yet, Oh child,  
Son, first-born, fairest—Oh sweet mouth, sweet eyes,  
That drew my life out through my suckling breast,  
That shone and clove mine heart through—Oh soft knees  
Clinging, Oh tender treadings of soft feet,  
Cheeks warm with little kissings—Oh child, child,  
What have we made each other? Lo, I felt  
Thy weight cleave to me, a burden of beauty, Oh son,  
Thy cradled brows and loveliest loving lips,  
The floral hair, the little lightening eyes,  
And all thy goodly glory; with mine hands  
Delicately I fed thee, with my tongue  
Tenderly spake, saying, Verily in God's time,  
For all the little likeness of thy limbs,  
Son, I shall make thee a kingly man to fight,  
A lordly leader; and hear before I die,  
“She bore the goodliest sword of all the world.”  
Oh! oh! For all my life turns round on me;  
I am severed from myself, my name is gone,  
My name that was a healing, it is changed,  
My name is a consuming. From this time,  
Though mine eyes reach to the end of all these things,  
My lips shall not unfasten till I die.

## SEMICHORUS.

She has filled with sighing the city,  
And the ways thereof with tears;  
She arose, she girdled her sides,  
She set her face as a bride's;  
She wept, and she had no pity;  
Trembled, and felt no fears.

## SEMICHORUS.

Her eyes were clear as the sun,  
    Her brows were fresh as the day;  
She girdled herself with gold,  
Her robes were manifold;  
But the days of her worship are done,  
Her praise is taken away.

## SEMICHORUS.

For she set her hand to the fire,  
    With her mouth she kindled the same;  
As the mouth of a flute-player,  
So was the mouth of her;  
With the might of her strong desire  
She blew the breath of the flame.

## SEMICHORUS.

She set her hand to the wood,  
    She took the fire in her hand;  
As one who is nigh to death,  
She panted with strange breath;  
She opened her lips unto blood,  
    She breathed and kindled the brand.

## SEMICHORUS.

As a wood-dove newly shot,  
    She sobbed and lifted her breast;  
She sighed and covered her eyes,  
Filling her lips with sighs;  
She sighed, she withdrew herself not,  
    She refrained not, taking not rest.

## SEMICHORUS.

But as the wind which is drouth,  
    And as the air which is death,  
As storm that severeth ships,  
Her breath severing her lips,

The breath came forth of her mouth  
And the fire came forth of her breath.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Queen, and you maidens, there is come on us  
A thing more deadly than the face of death;  
Meleager the good lord is as one slain.

SEMICHORUS.

Without sword, without sword is he stricken;  
Slain, and slain without hand.

SECOND MESSENGER.

For as keen ice divided of the sun  
His limbs divide, and as thawed snow the flesh  
Thaws from off all his body to the hair.

SEMICHORUS.

He wastes as the embers quicken;  
With the brand he fades as a brand.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Even while they sang and all drew hither and he  
Lifted both hands to crown the Arcadian's hair  
And fix the looser leaves, both hands fell down.

SEMICHORUS.

With rending of cheek and of hair  
Lament ye, mourn for him, weep.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Straightway the crown slid off and smote on earth,  
First fallen; and he, grasping his own hair, groaned  
And cast his raiment round his face, and fell.

SEMICHORUS.

Alas for visions that were,  
And soothsayings spoken in sleep.

SECOND MESSENGER.

But the king twitched his reins in and leapt down,

And caught him, crying out twice "Oh child!" and thrice,  
So that men's eyelids thickened with their tears.

SEMICHORUS.

Lament with a long lamentation,  
Cry, for an end is at hand.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Oh son, he said, son, lift thine eyes, draw breath,  
Pity me; But Meleager with sharp lips  
Gasped, and his face waxed like as sunburnt grass.

SEMICHORUS.

Cry aloud, Oh thou kingdom, Oh nation,  
Oh stricken, a ruinous land!

SECOND MESSENGER.

Whereat king Eneus, straightening feeble knees,  
With feeble hands heaved up a lessening weight,  
And laid him sadly in strange hands, and wept.

SEMICHORUS.

Thou art smitten, her lord, her desire,  
Thy dear blood wasted as rain.

SECOND MESSENGER.

And they with tears and rendings of the beard  
Bear hither a breathing body, wept upon  
And lightening at each footfall, sick to death.

SEMICHORUS.

Thou madest thy sword as a fire,  
With fire for a sword thou art slain.

SECOND MESSENGER.

And lo, the feast turned funeral, and the crowns  
Fallen; and the huntress and the hunter trapped;  
And weeping and changed faces and veiled hair.

MELEAGER.

Let your hands meet  
Round the weight of my head;

Lift ye my feet  
 As the feet of the dead;  
 For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten  
 as lead.

## CHORUS.

Oh thy luminous face,  
 Thine imperious eyes!  
 Oh the grief, Oh the grace,  
 As of day when it dies!  
 Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and sup-  
 pression of sighs?

## MELEAGER.

Is a bride so fair?  
 Is a maid so meek?  
 With unchapleted hair,  
 With unfilleted cheek,  
 Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as  
 blessing to speak.

## ATALANTA.

I would that with feet  
 Unsandalled, unshod,  
 Overbold, overfleet,  
 I had swum not nor trod  
 From Arcadia to Calydon northward, a blast of the envy  
 of God.

## MELEAGER.

Unto each man his fate;  
 Unto each as he saith  
 In whose fingers the weight  
 Of the world is as breath;  
 Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands had  
 laid hold upon death.

## CHORUS.

Not with cleaving of shields  
And their clash in thine ear,  
When the lord of fought fields  
Breaketh spearhaft from spear,  
Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with travail  
and labour and fear.

## MELEAGER.

Would God he had found me  
Beneath fresh boughs!  
Would God he had bound me  
Unawares in mine house,  
With light in mine eyes, and songs in my lips, and a  
crown on my brows!

## CHORUS.

Whence art thou sent from us?  
Whither thy goal?  
How art thou rent from us,  
Thou that wert whole,  
As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sundering  
of body and soul!

## MELEAGER.

My heart is within me  
As an ash in the fire;  
Whosoever hath seen me,  
Without lute, without lyre,  
Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that were ill  
to desire.

## CHORUS.

Who shall raise thee  
From the house of the dead?

Or what man praise thee  
 That thy praise may be said?  
 Alas thy beauty! alas thy body! alas thine head!

MELEAGER.

But thou, Oh mother,  
 The dreamer of dreams,  
 Wilt thou bring forth another  
 To feel the sun's beams  
 When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail by im-  
 passable streams?

ŒNEUS.

What thing wilt thou leave me  
 Now this thing is done?  
 A man wilt thou give me,  
 A son for my son,  
 For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the de-  
 sirable one?

CHORUS.

Thou wert glad above others,  
 Yea, fair beyond word;  
 Thou wert glad among mothers;  
 For each man that heard  
 Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings to the  
 feet of a bird.

ŒNEUS.

Who shall give back  
 Thy face of old years,  
 With travail made black,  
 Grown grey among fears,  
 Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of tears?

MELEAGER.

Though thou art as fire  
 Fed with fuel in vain,

My delight, my desire,  
 Is more chaste than the rain,  
 More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are that  
 live without stain.

## ATALANTA.

I would that as water  
 My life's blood had thawed,  
 Or as winter's wan daughter  
 Leaves lowland and lawn  
 Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee made  
 dark in thy dawn.

## CHORUS.

When thou dravest the men  
 Of the chosen of Thrace,  
 None turned him again  
 Nor endured he thy face  
 Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light from  
 a terrible place.

## ŒNEUS.

Thou shouldst die as he dies  
 For whom none sheddeth tears;  
 Filling thine eyes  
 And fulfilling thine ears  
 With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the beauty,  
 the splendour of spears.

## CHORUS.

In the ears of the world  
 It is sung, it is told,  
 And the light thereof hurled  
 And the noise thereof rolled  
 From the Acroceranun snow to the ford of the fleece of  
 gold.

## MELEAGER.

Would God ye could carry me  
 Forth of all these;  
 Heap sand and bury me  
 By the Chersonese  
 Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the thunder of  
 Pontic seas.

## CENEUS.

Dost thou mock at our praise  
 And the singing begun  
 And the men of strange days  
 Praising my son  
 In the folds of the hills of home, high places of  
 Calydon?

## MELEAGER.

For the dead man no home is;  
 Ah, better to be  
 What the flower of the foam is  
 In fields of the sea,  
 That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the gulf-  
 stream a garment for me.

## CHORUS.

Who shall seek thee and bring  
 And restore thee thy day,  
 When the dove dipt her wing  
 And the oars won their way  
 Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits of  
 Propontis with spray?

## MELEAGER.

Will ye crown me my tomb  
 Or exalt me my name,

Now my spirits consume,  
 Now my flesh is a flame?  
 Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleeping  
 to praise me or shame.

## CHORUS.

Turn back now, turn thee,  
 As who turns him to wake;  
 Though the life in thee burn thee,  
 Couldst thou bathe it and slake  
 Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east upon  
 west waters break?

## MELEAGER.

Would the winds blow me back  
 Or the waves hurl me home?  
 Ah, to touch in the track  
 Where the pine learnt to roam  
 Cold girdles and crowns of the sea-gods, cool blossoms of  
 water and foam!

## CHORUS.

The gods may release  
 That they made fast;  
 Thy soul shall have ease  
 In thy limbs at the last;  
 But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that is  
 overpast?

## MELEAGER.

Not the life of men's veins,  
 Not of flesh that conceives;  
 But the grace that remains,  
 The fair beauty that cleaves  
 To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the dews  
 on the leaves.

## CHORUS.

Thou wert helmsman and chief;  
 Wilt thou turn in an hour,  
 Thy limbs to the leaf,  
 Thy face to the flower,  
 Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who divide  
 and devour?

## MELEAGER.

The years are hungry,  
 They wail all their days;  
 The gods wax angry  
 And weary of praise;  
 And who shall bridle their lips? and who shall straiten  
 their ways?

## CHORUS.

The gods guard over us  
 With sword and with rod;  
 Weaving shadow to cover us,  
 Heaping the sod,  
 That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's face  
 before God.

## MELEAGER.

Oh holy head of Æneus, lo thy son  
 Guiltless, yet red from alien guilt, yet foul  
 With kinship of contaminated lives,  
 Lo, for their blood I die; and mine own blood  
 For bloodshedding of mine is mixed therewith,  
 That death may not discern me from my kin.  
 Yet with clean heart I die and faultless hand,  
 Not shamefully; thou therefore of thy love  
 Salute me, and bid fare among the dead  
 Well, as the dead fare; for the best man dead  
 Fares sadly; nathless I now faring well

Pass without fear where nothing is to fear  
Having thy love about me and thy goodwill,  
Oh father, among dark places and men dead.

CEneus.

Child, I salute thee with sad heart and tears,  
And bid thee comfort, being a perfect man  
In fight, and honourable in the house of peace.  
The gods give thee fair wage and dues of death,  
And me brief days and ways to come at thee.

MELEAGER.

Pray thou thy days be long before thy death,  
And full of ease and kingdom; seeing in death  
There is no comfort and none aftergrowth,  
Nor shall one thence look up and see day's dawn  
Nor light upon the land whither I go.  
Live thou, and take thy fill of days, and die  
When thy day comes; and make not much of death,  
Lest ere thy day thou reap an evil thing.  
Thou too, the bitter mother and mother-plague  
Of this my weary body—thou too, queen,  
The source and end, the sower and the scythe,  
The rain that ripens and the drought that slays,  
The sand that swallows and the spring that feeds,  
To make me and unmake me—thou, I say,  
Althæa, since my father's ploughshare, drawn  
Through fatal seedland of a female field,  
Furrowed thy body, whence a wheaten ear  
Strong from the sun and fragrant from the rains  
I sprang and cleft the closure of thy womb,  
Mother, I dying with unforgettable tongue  
Hail thee as holy and worship thee as just  
Who art unjust and unholy; and with my knees  
Would worship, but thy fire and subtlety,

Dissundering them, devour me; for these limbs  
Are as light dust and crumblings from mine urn  
Before the fire has touched them; and my face  
As a dead leaf or dead foot's mark on snow,  
And all this body a broken barren tree  
That was so strong, and all this flower of life  
Disbranched and desecrated miserably,  
And minished all that godlike muscle and might  
And lesser than a man's: for all my veins  
Fail me, and all mine ashen life burns down.  
I would thou hadst let me live; but gods averse,  
But fortune, and the fiery feet of change,  
And time, these would not, these tread out my life,  
These and not thou; me too thou hast loved, and I  
Thee; but this death was mixed with all my life,  
Mine end with my beginning: and this law,  
This only, slays me, and not my mother at all.  
And let no brother or sister grieve too sore,  
Nor melt their hearts out on me with their tears,  
Since extreme love and sorrowing overmuch  
Vex the great gods, and overloving men  
Slay and are slain for love's sake; and this house  
Shall bear much better children; why should these  
Weep? but in patience let them live their lives  
And mine pass by forgotten: thou alone,  
Mother, thou sole and only, thou not these,  
Keep me in mind a little when I die  
Because I was thy first-born; let thy soul  
Pity me, pity even me gone hence and dead  
Though thou wert wroth, and though thou bear again  
Much happier sons, and all men later born  
Exceedingly excel me, yet do thou  
Forget not, nor think shame; I was thy son.

Time was, I did not shame thee; and time was,  
I thought to live and make thee honourable  
With deeds as great as these men's; but they live,  
These, and I die; and what thing should have been  
Surely I know not; yet I charge thee, seeing  
I am dead already, love me not the less,  
Me, Oh my mother; I charge thee by these gods,  
My father's, and that holier breast of thine,  
By these that see me dying, and that which nursed,  
Love me not less, thy first-born: though grief come,  
Grief only, of me, and of all these great joy,  
And shall come always to thee; for thou knowest,  
Oh mother, Oh breasts that bare me, for ye know,  
Oh sweet head of my mother, sacred eyes,  
Ye know my soul albeit I sinned, ye know  
Albeit I kneel not, neither touch thy knees,  
But with my lips I kneel, and with my heart  
I fall about thy feet and worship thee.  
And ye farewell now, all my friends; and ye,  
Kinsmen, much younger and glorious more than I,  
Sons of my mother's sister; and all farewell  
That were in Colchis with me, and bare down  
The waves and wars that met us: and though times  
Change, and though now I be not anything,  
Forget not me among you, what I did  
In my good time; for even by all those days,  
Those days and this, and your own living souls,  
And by the light and luck of you that live,  
And by this miserable spoil, and me  
Dying, I beseech you, let my name not die.  
But thou, dear, touch me with thy rose-like hands,  
And fasten up mine eyelids with thy mouth,  
A bitter kiss; and grasp me with thine arms,

Printing with heavy lips my light waste flesh,  
Made light and thin by heavy-handed fate,  
And with thine holy maiden eyes drop dew,  
Drop tears for dew upon me who am dead,  
Me who have loved thee; seeing without sin done  
I am gone down to the empty weary house  
Where no flesh is nor beauty nor swift eyes  
Nor sound of mouth nor might of hands and feet.  
But thou, dear, hide my body with thy veil,  
And with thy raiment cover foot and head,  
And stretch thyself upon me and touch hands  
With hands and lips with lips: be pitiful  
As thou art maiden perfect; let no man  
Defile me to despise me, saying, This man  
Died woman-wise, a woman's offering, slain  
Through female fingers in his woof of life,  
Dishonourable; for thou hast honoured me.  
And now for God's sake kiss me once and twice  
And let me go; for the night gathers me,  
And in the night shall no man gather fruit.

## ATALANTA.

Hail thou: but I with heavy face and feet  
Turn homeward and am gone out of thine eyes.

## CHORUS.

Who shall contend with his lords  
Or cross them or do them wrong?  
Who shall bind them as with cords?  
Who shall tame them as with song?  
Who shall smite them as with swords?  
For the hands of their kingdom are strong.

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LYRICAL POEMS.

I.



## THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE.

HERE, where the world is quiet,  
    Here, where all trouble seems  
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot  
    In doubtful dreams of dreams;  
I watch the green field growing  
    For reaping folk and sowing,  
For harvest time and mowing,  
    A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,  
    And men that laugh and weep  
Of what may come hereafter  
    For men that sow to reap:  
I am weary of days and hours,  
    Blown buds of barren flowers,  
Desires and dreams and powers  
    And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbour  
    And far from eye or ear  
Wan waves and wet winds labour,  
    Weak ships and spirits steer;

They drive adrift, and whither  
They wot not who make thither;  
But no such winds blow hither,  
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,  
No heather-flower or vine,  
But bloomless buds of poppies,  
Green grapes of Proserpine,  
Pale beds of blowing rushes  
Where no leaf blooms or blushes  
Save this whereout she crushes  
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,  
In fruitless fields of corn,  
They bow themselves and slumber  
All night till light is born;  
And like a soul belated,  
In hell and heaven unmated,  
By cloud and mist abated  
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,  
He too with death shall dwell,  
Nor wake with wings in heaven,  
Nor weep for pains in hell;  
Though one were fair as roses,  
His beauty clouds and closes;  
And well though love reposes,  
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,  
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands  
Who gathers all things mortal  
With cold immortal hands;  
Her languid lips are sweeter  
Than love's who fears to greet her  
To men that mix and meet her  
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,  
She waits for all men born;  
Forgets the earth her mother,  
The life of fruits and corn;  
And spring and seed and swallow  
Take wing for her and follow  
Where summer song rings hollow  
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,  
The old loves with wearier wings;  
And all dead years draw thither,  
And all disastrous things;  
Dead dreams of days forsaken  
Blind buds that snows have shaken,  
Wild leaves that winds have taken,  
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,  
And joy was never sure;  
To-day will die to-morrow;  
Time stoops to no man's lure;

And love, grown faint and fretful,  
With lips but half regretful  
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful  
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,  
From hope and fear set free,  
We thank with brief thanksgiving  
Whatever gods may be  
That no life lives for ever;  
That dead men rise ~~not~~ never;  
That even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,  
Nor any change of light:  
Nor sound of waters shaken,  
Nor any sound or sight:  
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,  
Nor days nor things diurnal;  
Only the sleep eternal  
In an eternal night.

## A LAMENTATION.

## I.

Who hath known the ways of time  
Or trodden behind his feet?  
There is no such man among men.  
For chance overcomes him, or crime  
Changes; for all things sweet  
In time wax bitter again.  
Who shall give sorrow enough,  
Or who the abundance of tears?  
Mine eyes are heavy with love  
And a sword gone thorough mine ears,  
A sound like a sword and fire,  
For pity, for great desire;  
Who shall insure me thereof,  
Lest I die, being full of my fears?

Who hath known the ways and the wrath,  
The sleepless spirit, the root  
And blossom of evil will,  
The divine device of a god?  
Who shall behold it or hath?  
The twice-tongued prophets are mute,  
The many speakers are still;  
No foot has travelled or trod,

No hand has meted, his path.  
Man's fate is a blood-red fruit,  
And the mighty gods have their fill  
And relax not the rein, or the rod.

Ye were mighty in heart from of old,  
Ye slew with the spear, and are slain.  
Keen after heat is the cold,  
Sore after summer is rain,  
And melteth man to the bone.  
As water he weareth away,  
As a flower, as an hour in a day,  
Fallen from laughter to moan.  
But my spirit is shaken with fear  
Lest an evil thing begin,  
New-born, a spear for a spear,  
And one for another sin.  
Or ever our tears began,  
It was known from of old and said;  
One law for a living man,  
And another law for the dead.  
For these are fearful and sad,  
Vain, and things without breath;  
While he lives let a man be glad,  
For none hath joy of his death.

## II.

Who hath known the pain, the old pain of earth,  
Or all the travail of the sea,  
The many ways and waves, the birth  
Fruitless, the labour nothing worth?  
Who hath known, who knoweth, Oh gods? not we.

There is none shall say he hath seen,  
There is none he hath known.  
Though he saith, Lo, a lord have I been,  
I have reaped and sown;  
I have seen the desire of mine eyes,  
The beginning of love,  
The season of kisses and sighs  
And the end thereof.  
I have known the ways of the sea,  
All the perilous ways;  
Strange winds have spoken with me,  
And the tongues of strange days.  
I have hewn the pine for ships;  
Where steeds run arow,  
I have seen from their bridled lips  
Foam blown as the snow.  
With snapping of chariot-poles  
And with straining of oars  
I have grazed in the race the goals,  
In the storm the shores;  
As a greave is cleft with an arrow  
At the joint of the knee,  
I have cleft through the sea-straits narrow  
To the heart of the sea.  
When air was smitten in sunder  
I have watched on high  
The ways of the stars and the thunder  
In the night of the sky;  
Where the dark brings forth light as a flower,  
As from lips that dissever;  
One abideth the space of an hour,  
One endureth for ever.

Lo, what hath he seen or known  
Of the way and the wave  
Unbeholden, unsailed-on, unsown,  
From the breast to the grave?

Or ever the stars were made, or skies,  
Grief was born, and the kinless night,  
Mother of gods without form or name.  
And light is born out of heaven, and dies,  
And one day knows not another's light,  
But night is one, and her shape the same.  
But dumb the goddesses underground  
Wait, and we hear not on earth if their feet  
Rise, and the night wax loud with their wings;  
Dumb, without word or shadow of sound;  
And sift in scales, and winnow as wheat  
Men's souls, and sorrow of manifold things.

### III.

Nor less of grief than ours  
The gods wrought long ago  
To bruise men one by one;  
But with the incessant hours  
Fresh grief and greener woe  
Spring, as the sudden sun  
Year after year makes flowers;  
And these die down and grow,  
And the next year lacks none.

As these men sleep, have slept  
The old heroes in time fled,

No dream-divided sleep;  
And holier eyes have wept  
    Than ours, when on her dead  
        Gods have seen Thetis weep,  
With heavenly hair far-swept  
    Back, heavenly hands outspread  
        Round what she could not keep,

Could not one day withhold,  
    One night; and like as these  
        White ashes of no weight,  
Held not his urn the cold  
    Ashes of Heracles?  
        For all things born one gate  
Opens, no gate of gold;  
    Opens; and no man sees  
        Beyond the gods and fate.

## BETWEEN THE SUNSET AND THE SEA.

(Song from "Chastelard.")

BETWEEN the sunset and the sea,  
My love laid hands and lips on me;  
Of sweet came sour, of day came night,  
Of long desire came brief delight:  
Ah love, and what thing came of thee  
Between the sea-downs and the sea?

Between the sea-mark and the sea  
Joy grew to grief, grief grew to me;

Love turned to tears, and tears to fire,  
And dead delight to new desire;  
Love's talk, love's touch there seemed to be  
Between the sea-sand and the sea.

Between the sundown and the sea  
Love watched one hour of love with me;  
Then down the all-golden water-ways  
His feet flew after yesterday's;  
I saw them come and saw them flee  
Between the sea-foam and the sea.

Between the sea-strand and the sea  
Love fell on sleep, sleep fell on me;  
The first star saw twain turn to one  
Between the moonrise and the sun;  
The next, that saw not love, saw me  
Between the sea-banks and the sea.

#### SESTINA.

I SAW my soul at rest upon a day  
As a bird sleeping in the nest of night,  
Among soft leaves that give the starlight way  
To touch its wings but not its eyes with light;  
So that it knew as one in visions may,  
And knew not as men waking, of delight.

This was the measure of my soul's delight;  
It had no power of joy to fly by day,  
Nor part in the large lordship of the light;  
But in a secret moon-beholden way

Had all its will of dreams and pleasant night,  
And all the love and light that sleepers may.

But such life's triumph as men waking may  
It might not have to feed its faint delight  
Between the stars by night and sun by day,  
Shut up with green leaves and a little light;  
Because its way was as a lost star's way,  
A world's not wholly known of day or night.

All loves and dreams and sounds and gleams of night  
Made it all music that such minstrels may,  
And all they had they gave it of delight;  
But in the full face of the fire of day  
What place shall be for any starry light,  
What part of heaven in all the wide sun's way?

Yet the soul woke not, sleeping by the way,  
Watched as a nursling of the large-eyed night,  
And sought no strength nor knowledge of the day,  
Nor closer touch conclusive of delight,  
Nor mightier joy nor truer than dreamers may,  
Nor more of song than they, nor more of light.

For who sleeps once and sees the secret light  
Whereby sleep shows the soul a fairer way  
Between the rise and rest of day and night,  
Shall care no more to fare as all men may,  
But he his place of pain or of delight,  
There shall he dwell, beholding night as day.

Song, have thy day, and take thy fill of light  
Before the night be fallen across thy way;  
Sing while he may, man hath no long delight.

## THE OBLATION.

Ask nothing more of me, sweet;  
All I can give you I give.  
Heart of my heart, were it more,  
More would be laid at your feet:  
Love that should help you to live,  
Song that should spur you to soar.

All things were nothing to give  
Once to have sense of you more,  
Touch you and taste of you sweet,  
Think you and breathe you and live,  
Swept of your wings as they soar,  
Trodden by chance of your feet.

I that have love and no more  
Give you but love of you, sweet:  
He that hath more, let him give;  
He that hath wings, let him soar;  
Mine is the heart at your feet  
Here, that must love you to live.

## A LEAVE-TAKING.

LET us go hence, my songs; she will not hear.  
Let us go hence together without fear;  
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over,  
And over all old things and all things dear.  
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.  
Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,  
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part; she will not know.  
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,  
Full of blown sand and foam; what help is there?  
There is no help, for all these things are so,  
And all the world is bitter as a tear.  
And how those things are, though ye strove to show  
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence; she will not weep.  
We gave love many dreams and days to keep,  
Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,  
Saying, "If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle and reap."  
All is reaped now; no grass is left to mow;  
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,  
She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest; she will not love.  
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof.  
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.

Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough.  
Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep;  
And though she saw all heaven in flower above,  
She would not love.

Let us give up, go down; she will not care.  
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,  
And the sea moving saw before it move  
One moon-flower making all the foam-flowers fair;  
Though all those waves went over us, and drove  
Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair  
She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence; she will not see.  
Sing all once more together; surely she,  
She too, remembering days and words that were,  
Will turn a little toward us, sighing; but we,  
We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been there.  
Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,  
She would not see.

#### A BALLAD OF BURDENS.

THE burden of fair women. Vain delight,  
And love self-slain in some sweet shameful way,  
And sorrowful old age that comes by night  
As a thief comes that has no heart by day,  
And change that finds fair cheeks and leaves them grey,  
And weariness that keeps awake for hire,  
And grief that says what pleasure used to say:  
This is the end of every man's desire,

The burden of bought kisses. This is sore,  
 A burden without fruit in childbearing;  
 Between the nightfall and the dawn threescore,  
 Threescore between the dawn and evening.  
 The shuddering in thy lips, the shuddering  
 In thy sad eyelids tremulous like fire,  
 Makes love seem shameful and a wretched thing.  
 This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down,  
 Cover thy head, and weep; for verily  
 These market-men that buy thy white and brown  
 In the last days shall take no thought for thee.  
 In the last days like earth thy face shall be,  
 Yea, like sea-marsh made thick with brine and mire,  
 Sad with sick leavings of the sterile sea.  
 This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear  
 Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed;  
 And say at night, "Would God the day were here,"  
 And say at dawn, "Would God the day were dead."  
 With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,  
 And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,  
 Pain for thy girdle, and sorrow upon thine head;  
 This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bright colours. Thou shalt see  
 Gold tarnished, and the grey above the green;  
 And as the thing thou seest thy face shall be,  
 And no more as the thing beforetime seen.

And thou shalt say of mercy, "It hath been,"  
And living, watch the old lips and loves expire,  
And talking, tears shall take thy breath between.  
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sad sayings. In that day  
Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell  
Thy times and ways and words of love, and say  
How one was dear and one desirable,  
And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell,  
But now with lights reverse the old hours retire  
And the last hour is shod with fire from hell.  
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of four seasons. Rain in spring,  
White rain and wind among the tender trees;  
A summer of green sorrows gathering,  
Rank autumn in a mist of miseries,  
With sad face set towards the year, that sees  
The charred ash drop out of the dropping pyre,  
And winter wan with many maladies;  
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of dead faces. Out of sight  
And out of love, beyond the reach of hands,  
Changed in the changing of the dark and light,  
They walk and weep about the barren lands  
Where no seed is, nor any garner stands,  
Where in short breaths the doubtful days respire,  
And time's turned glass lets through the sighing sands  
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of much gladness. Life and lust  
Forsake thee, and the face of thy delight;  
And underfoot the heavy hour strews dust,  
And overhead strange weathers burn and bite;  
And where the red was, lo the bloodless white,  
And where truth was, the likeness of a liar,  
And where day was, the likeness of the night;  
This is the end of every man's desire.

## L'ENVY.

Princes, and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,  
Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire;  
For life is sweet, but after life is death.  
This is the end of every man's desire.

## SAPPHO.

(FROM ANACTORIA.)

For who shall change with prayers or thanksgivings  
The mystery of the cruelty of things?  
Or say what God above all gods and years,  
With offering and blood-sacrifice of tears,  
With lamentation from strange lands, from graves  
Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of slaves,  
From prison, and from plunging prows of ships  
Through flamelike foam of the sea's closing lips—  
With thwartings of strange signs, and wind-blown hair  
Of comets, desolating the dim air,  
When darkness is made fast with seals and bars,  
And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,

Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings  
Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—  
With sorrow of labouring moons, and altering light  
And travail of the planets of the night,  
And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,  
Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven?  
Is not this incense bitterness, his meat  
Murder? his hidden face and iron feet  
Hath not man known, and felt them on their way  
Threaten and trample all things and every day?  
Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed  
Spirit and flesh with longing? filled with thirst  
Their lips who cried unto him? who bade exceed  
The fervid will, fall short the feeble deed,  
Bade sink the spirit and the flesh aspire,  
Pain animate the dust of dead desire,  
And life yield up her flower to violent fate?  
Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,  
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,  
And mix his immortality with death.  
Why hath he made us? what had all we done  
That we should live and loathe the sterile sun,  
And with the moon wax paler as she wanes,  
And pulse by pulse feel time grow through our veins?  
Thee too the years shall cover; thou shalt be  
As the rose born of one same blood with thee,  
As a song sung, as a word said, and fall  
Flower-wise, and be not any more at all,  
Nor any memory of thee anywhere;  
For never Muse has bound above thine hair  
The high Pierian flower whose graft outgrows  
All summer kinship of the mortal rose  
And colour of deciduous days, nor shed

Reflex and flush of heaven about thine head,  
Nor reddened brows made pale by floral grief  
With splendid shadow from that lordlier leaf.  
Yea, thou shalt be forgotten like spilt wine,  
Except these kisses of my lips on thine  
Brand them with immortality; but me—  
Men shall not see bright fire nor hear the sea,  
Nor mix their hearts with music, nor behold  
Cast forth of heaven with feet of awful gold  
And plumeless wings that make the bright air blind,  
Lightning, with thunder for a hound behind  
Hunting through fields unfurrowed and unsown—  
But in the light and laughter, in the moan  
And music, and in grasp of lip and hand  
And shudder of water that makes felt on land  
The immeasurable tremor of all the sea,  
Memories shall mix and metaphors of me.  
Like me shall be the shuddering calm of night,  
When all the winds of the world for pure delight  
Close lips that quiver and fold up wings that ache;  
When nightingales are louder for love's sake,  
And leaves tremble like lute-strings or like fire;  
Like me the one star swooning with desire  
Even at the cold lips of the sleepless moon,  
As I at thine; like me the waste white noon,  
Burnt through with barren sunlight; and like me  
The land-stream and the tide-stream in the sea.  
I am sick with time as these with ebb and flow,  
And by the yearning in my veins I know  
The yearning sound of waters; and mine eyes  
Burn as that beamless fire which fills the skies  
With troubled stars and travailing things of flame;  
And in my heart the grief consuming them

Labours, and in my veins the thirst of these,  
And all the summer travail of the trees  
And all the winter sickness; and the earth,  
Filled full with deadly works of death and birth,  
Sore spent with hungry lusts of birth and death,  
Has pain like mine in her divided breath;  
Her spring of leaves is barren, and her fruit  
Ashes; her boughs are burdened, and her root  
Fibrous and gnarled with poison; underneath  
Serpents have gnawn it through with tortuous teeth  
Made sharp upon the bones of all the dead,  
And wild birds rend her branches overhead.  
These, woven as raiment for his word and thought,  
These hath God made, and me as these, and wrought  
Song, and hath lit it at my lips; and me  
Earth shall not gather though she feed on thee.  
As a shed tear shalt thou be shed; but I—  
Lo, earth may labour, men live long and die,  
Years change and stars, and the high God devise  
New things, and old things wane before his eyes  
Who wields and wrecks them, being more strong than they—  
But, having made me, me he shall not slay.  
Nor slay nor satiate, like those herds of his  
Who laugh and live a little, and their kiss  
Contents them, and their loves are swift and sweet,  
And sure death grasps and gains them with slow feet,  
Love they or hate they, strive or bow their knees—  
And all these end; he hath his will of these.  
Yea, but albeit he slay me, hating me—  
Albeit he hide me in the deep dear sea  
And cover me with cool wan foam, and ease  
This soul of mine as any soul of these,  
And give me water and great sweet waves, and make

The very sea's name lordlier for my sake,  
The whole sea sweeter—albeit I die indeed  
And hide myself and sleep and no man heed,  
Of me the high God hath not all his will.  
Blossom of branches, and on each high hill  
Clear air and wind, and under in clamorous vales  
Fierce noises of the fiery nightingales,  
Buds burning in the sudden spring like fire,  
The wan washed sand and the waves' vain desire,  
Sails seen like blown white flowers at sea, and words  
That bring tears swiftest, and long notes of birds  
Violently singing till the whole world sings—  
I Sappho shall be one with all these things,  
With all high things for ever; and my face  
Seen once, my songs once heard in a strange place,  
Cleave to men's lives, and waste the days thereof  
With gladness and much sadness and long love.  
Yea, they shall say, earth's womb hath borne in vain  
New things, and never this best thing again;  
Borne days and men, borne fruits and wars and wine,  
Seasons and songs, but no song more like mine.  
And they shall know me as ye who have known me here,  
Last year when I loved Atthis, and this year  
When I love thee; and they shall praise me, and say  
"She hath all time as all we have our day,  
Shall she not live and have her will"—even I?  
Yea, though thou diest, I say I shall not die.  
For these shall give me of their souls, shall give  
Life, and the days and loves wherewith I live,  
Shall quicken me with loving, fill with breath,  
Save me and serve me, strive for me with death.  
Alas, that neither moon nor snow nor dew  
Nor all cold things can purge me wholly through,

Assuage me nor allay me nor appease,  
 Till supreme sleep shall bring me bloodless ease;  
 Till time wax faint in all his periods;  
 Till fate undo the bondage of the gods,  
 And lay, to slake and satiate me all through,  
 Lotus and Lethe on my lips like dew,  
 And shed around and over and under me  
 Thick darkness and the insuperable sea.

## ITYLUS.

SWALLOW, my sister, Oh sister swallow,  
 How can thine heart be full of the spring?  
 A thousand summers are over and dead.  
 What hast thou found in the spring to follow?  
 What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?  
 What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

Oh swallow, sister, Oh fair swift swallow,  
 Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,  
 The soft south whither thine heart is set?  
 Shall not the grief of the old time follow?  
 Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?  
 Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, Oh fleet sweet swallow,  
 Thy way is long to the sun and the south;  
 But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,  
 Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,  
 From tawny body and sweet small mouth  
 Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,  
    Oh swallow, sister, Oh changing swallow,  
        All spring through till the spring be done,  
        Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,  
        Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,  
        Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, Oh soft light swallow,  
    Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,  
        How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?  
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,  
    Till life forget and death remember,  
        Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, Oh singing swallow,  
    I know not how thou hast heart to sing.  
        Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?  
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,  
    And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:  
        But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

Oh swallow, sister, Oh fleeting swallow,  
    My heart in me is a molten ember  
        And over my head the waves have met.  
But thou wouldest tarry or I would follow  
    Could I forget or thou remember,  
        Couldst thou remember and I forget.

Oh sweet stray sister, Oh shifting swallow,  
    The heart's division divideth us.  
        Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;  
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow  
    To the place of the slaying of Itylus,  
        The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

Oh swallow, sister, Oh rapid swallow,  
 I pray thee sing not a little space.  
 Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?  
 The woven web that was plain to follow,  
 The small slain body, the flower-like face,  
 Can I remember if thou forget?

Oh sister, sister, thy first-begotten!  
 The hands that cling and the feet that follow,  
 The voice of the child's blood crying yet  
*Who hath remembered me? Who hath forgotten?*  
 Thou hast forgotten, Oh summer swallow,  
 But the world shall end when I forget.

#### IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

BACK to the flower-town, side by side,  
 The bright months bring,  
 New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,  
 Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,  
 Filled full of sun;  
 All things come back to her, being free;  
 All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot  
 Flowers that were dead  
 Live, and old suns revive; but not  
 That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,  
Far north, I hear  
One face shall never turn to me  
As once this year:

Shall never smile and turn and rest  
On mine as there,  
Nor one most sacred hand be prest  
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger  
Half run before;  
The youngest to the oldest singer  
That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find  
Till all grief end,  
In holiest age our mightiest mind,  
Father and friend.

But thou, if anything endure,  
If hope there be,  
Oh spirit that man's life left pure,  
Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were  
Look earthward now;  
Let dreams revive the reverend hair,  
The imperial brow;

Come back in sleep, for in the life  
Where thou art not  
We find none like thee. Time and strife  
And the world's lot

Move thee no more, but love at least,  
And reverent heart  
May move thee, royal and released,  
Soul, as thou art.

And thou, his Florence, to thy trust  
Receive and keep,  
Keep safe his dedicated dust,  
His sacred sleep.

So shall thy lovers, come from far,  
Mix with thy name,  
As morning-star with evening-star  
His faultless fame.

#### MADONNA MIA.

UNDER green apple-boughs  
That never a storm will rouse,  
My lady hath her house  
Between two bowers;  
In either of the twain  
Red roses full of rain;  
She hath for bondwomen  
All kind of flowers.

She hath no handmaid fair  
To draw her curled gold hair  
Through rings of gold that bear  
Her whole hair's weight;

She hath no maids to stand  
Gold-clothed on either hand;  
In all the great green land  
None is so great.

She hath no more to wear  
But one white hood of vair  
Drawn over eyes and hair,  
    Wrought with strange gold,  
Made for some great queen's head,  
Some fair great queen since dead;  
And one strait gown of red  
    Against the cold.

Beneath her eyelids deep  
Love lying seems asleep,  
Love, swift to wake, to weep,  
    To laugh, to gaze;  
Her breasts are like white birds,  
And all her gracious words  
As water-grass to herds  
    In the June-days.

To her all dews that fall  
And rains are musical;  
Her flowers are fed from all,  
    Her joy from these;  
In the deep-feathered firs  
Their gift of joy is hers,  
In the least breath that stirs  
    Across the trees.

She grows with greenest leaves,  
Ripens with reddest sheaves,  
Forgets, remembers, grieves,  
And is not sad;  
The quiet lands and skies  
Leave light upon her eyes;  
None knows her, weak or wise,  
Or tired or glad.

None knows, none understands,  
What flowers are like her hands;  
Though you should search all lands  
Wherein time grows,  
What snows are like her feet,  
Though his eyes burn with heat  
Through gazing on my sweet,  
Yet no man knows.

Only this thing is said;  
That white and gold and red,  
God's three chief words, man's bread  
And oil and wine,  
Were given her for dowers,  
And kingdom of all hours,  
And grace of goodly flowers  
And various vine.

This is my lady's praise:  
God after many days  
Wrought her in unknown ways,  
In sunset lands.

This was my lady's birth;  
 God gave her might and mirth,  
 And laid his whole sweet earth  
 Between her hands.

Under deep apple-boughs  
 My lady hath her house;  
 She wears upon her brows  
 The flower thereof;  
 All saying but what God saith  
 To her is as vain breath;  
 She is more strong than death,  
 Being strong as love.

#### A BALLAD OF LIFE.

I FOUND in dreams a place of wind and flowers,  
 Full of sweet trees and colour of glad grass,  
 In midst whereof there was  
 A lady clothed like summer with sweet hours,  
 Her beauty, fervent as a fiery moon,  
 Made my blood burn and swoon  
 Like a flame rained upon.  
 Sorrow had filled her shaken eyelids blue,  
 And her mouth's sad red heavy rose all through  
 Seemed sad with glad things gone.

She held a little cithern by the strings,  
 Shaped heartwise, strung with subtle-coloured hair  
 Of some dead lute player  
 That in dead years had done delicious things.  
*Swinburne, Atalanta.*

The seven strings were named accordingly:  
The first string charity,  
The second tenderness,  
The rest were pleasure, sorrow, sleep, and sin,  
And loving kindness, that is pity's kin  
And is most pitiless.

There were three men with her, each garmented  
With gold and shod with gold upon the feet;  
And with plucked ears of wheat.  
The first man's hair was wound about his head:  
His face was red, and his mouth curled and sad;  
All his gold garment had  
Pale stains of dust and rust.  
A riven hood was pulled across his eyes;  
The token of him being upon this wise  
Made for a sign of Lust.

The next was Shame, with heavy hollow face  
Coloured like green wood when flame kindles it.  
He hath such feeble feet  
They may not well endure in any place.  
His face was full of grey old miseries,  
And all his blood's increase  
Was even increase of pain.  
The last was Fear, that is akin to Death;  
He is Shame's friend, and always as Shame saith  
Fear answers him again.

My soul said in me; This is marvellous,  
Seeing the air's face is not so delicate  
Nor the sun's grace so great,  
If sin and she be kin or amorous.

And seeing where maidens served her on their knees,  
 I bade one crave of these  
 To know the cause thereof.  
 Then Fear said: I am Pity that was dead.  
 And Shame said: I am Sorrow comforted.  
 And Lust said: I am Love.

Thereat her hands began a lute-playing  
 And her sweet mouth a song in a strange tongue;  
 And all the while she sung  
 There was no sound but long tears following  
 Long tears upon men's faces, waxen white  
 With extreme sad delight.  
 But those three following men  
 Became as men raised up among the dead;  
 Great glad mouths open, and fair cheeks made red  
 With child's blood come again.

Then I said: Now assuredly I see  
 My lady is perfect, and transfigureth  
 All sin and sorrow and death,  
 Making them fair as her own eyelids be,  
 Or lips wherein my whole soul's life abides;  
 Or as her sweet white sides  
 And bosom carved to kiss.  
 Now therefore, if her pity further me,  
 Doubtless for her sake all my days shall be  
 As righteous as she is.

Forth ballad, and take roses in both arms,  
 Even till the rose touch thee in the throat  
 Wherè the least thornprick harms;  
 And girdled in thy golden singing-coat,

Come thou before my lady and say this;  
 Borgia, thy gold hair's colour burns in me,  
 Thy mouth makes beat my blood in feverish rhymes;  
 Therefore so many as these roses be,  
 Kiss me so many times.

Then it may be, seeing how sweet she is,  
 That she will stoop herself none otherwise  
 Than a blown vine-branch doth,  
 And kiss thee with soft laughter on thine eyes,  
 Ballad, and on thy mouth.

### AHOLIBAH.

In the beginning God made thee  
 A woman well to look upon,  
 Thy tender body as a tree  
 Whereon cool wind hath always blown  
 Till the clean branches be well grown.

There was none like thee in the land;  
 The girls that were thy bondwomen  
 Did bind thee with a purple band  
 Upon thy forehead, that all men  
 Should know thee for God's handmaiden.

Strange raiment clad thee like a bride,  
 With silk to wear on hands and feet,  
 And plates of gold on either side:  
 Wine made thee glad, and thou didst eat  
 Honey, and choice of pleasant meat.

And fishers in the middle sea  
Did get thee sea-fish and sea-weeds  
In colour like the robes on thee;  
And curious work of plaited reeds,  
And wools wherein live purple bleeds.

And round the edges of thy cup  
Men wrought thee marvels out of gold,  
Strong snakes with lean throats lifted up,  
Large eyes whereon the brows had hold,  
And scaly things their slime kept cold.

For thee they blew soft winds in flutes  
And ground sweet roots for cunning scent;  
Made slow because of many lutes,  
The wind among thy chambers went  
Wherein no light was violent.

God called thy name Aholibah,  
His tabernacle being in thee,  
A witness through waste Asia;  
Thou wert a tent sewn cunningly  
With gold and colours of the sea.

God gave thee gracious ministers  
And all their work who plait and weave;  
The cunning of embroiderers  
That sew the pillow to the sleeve,  
And likeness of all things that live.

Thy garments upon thee were fair  
With scarlet and with yellow thread;  
Also the weaving of thine hair  
Was as fine gold upon thy head,  
And thy silk shoes were sewn with red.

All sweet things he bade sift, and ground  
As a man grindeth wheat in mills  
With strong wheels alway going round;  
He gave thee corn, and grass that fills  
The cattle on a thousand hills.

The wine of many seasons fed  
Thy mouth, and made it fair and clean;  
Sweet oil was poured out on thy head  
And ran down like cool rain between  
The strait close locks it melted in.

The strong men and the captains knew  
Thy chambers wrought and fashioned  
With gold and covering of blue,  
And the blue raiment of thine head  
Who satest on a stately bed.

All these had on their garments wrought  
The shape of beasts and creeping things.  
The body that availeth not,  
Flat backs of worms and veined wings,  
And the lewd bulk that sleeps and stings.

Also the chosen of the years,  
The multitude being at ease,  
With sackbuts and with dulcimers  
And noise of shawms and psalteries  
Made mirth within the ears of these.

But as a common woman doth,  
Thou didst think evil and devise;  
The sweet smell of thy breast and mouth  
Thou madest as the harlot's wise,  
And there was painting on thine eyes.

Yea, in the woven guest-chamber  
And by the painted passages  
Where the strange gracious paintings were,  
State upon state of companies,  
There came on thee the lust of these.

Because of shapes on either wall  
Sea-coloured from some rare blue shell  
At many a Tyrian interval,  
Horsemen on horses, girdled well,  
Delicate and desirable,

Thou saidest: I am sick of love:  
Stay with me flagons, comfort me  
With apples for my pain thereof,  
Till my hands gather in his tree  
That fruit wherein my lips would be.

Yea, saidest thou, I will go up  
When there is no more shade than one  
May cover with a hollow cup,  
And make my bed against the sun  
Till my blood's violence be done.

Thy mouth was leant upon the wall  
Against the painted mouth, thy chin  
Touched the hair's painted curve and fall;  
Thy deep throat, fallen lax and thin,  
Worked as the blood's beat worked therein.

Therefore, Oh thou Aholibah,  
God is not glad because of thee;  
And thy fine gold shall pass away  
Like those fair coins of ore that be  
Washed over by the middle sea.

Then will one make thy body bare  
To strip it of all gracious things,  
And pluck the cover from thine hair,  
And break the gift of many kings,  
Thy wrist-rings and thine ankle-rings.

Likewise the man whose body joins  
To thy smooth body, as was said,  
Who hath a girdle on his loins,  
And dyed attire upon his head—  
The same who, seeing, worshipped,

Because thy face was like the face  
Of a clean maiden that smells sweet,  
Because thy gait was as the pace  
Of one that opens not her feet  
And is not heard within the street—

Even he, Oh thou Aholibah,  
Made separate from thy desire,  
Shall cut thy nose and ears away  
And bruise thee for thy body's hire,  
And burn the residue with fire.

Then shall the heathen people say  
The multitude being at ease;  
Lo, this is that Aholibah  
Whose name was blown among strange seas,  
Grown old with soft adulteries.

Also her bed was made of green,  
Her windows beautiful for glass,  
That she had made her bed between:  
Yea, for pure lust her body was  
Made like white summer-coloured grass.

Her raiment was a strong man's spoil;  
Upon a table by a bed  
She set mine incense and mine oil  
To be the beauty of her head  
In chambers walled about with red.

Also between the walls she had  
Fair faces of strong men portrayed;  
All girded round the loins, and clad  
With several cloths of woven braid  
And garments marvellously made.

Therefore the wrath of God shall be  
Set as a watch upon her way;  
And whoso findeth by the sea  
Blown dust of bones will hardly say  
If this were that Aholibah.

### MATER TRIUMPHALIS.

MOTHER of man's time-travelling generations,  
Breath of his nostrils, heartblood of his heart,  
God above all Gods worshipped of all nations,  
Light above light, law beyond law, thou art.

Thy face is as a sword smiting in sunder  
Shadows and chains and dreams and iron things;  
The sea is dumb before thy face, the thunder  
Silent, the skies are narrower than thy wings.

Angels and Gods, spirit and sense, thou takest  
In thy right hand as drops of dust or dew;  
The temples and the towers of time thou breakest,  
His thoughts and words and works, to make them new.

All we have wandered from thy ways, have hidden  
Eyes from thy glory and ears from calls they heard;  
Called of thy trumpets vainly, called and chidden,  
Scourged of thy speech and wounded of thy word.

We have known thee and have not known thee; stood be-  
side thee,  
Felt thy lips breathe, set foot where thy feet trod,  
Loved and renounced, and worshipped and denied thee,  
As though thou wert but as another God.

“One hour for sleep,” we said, “and yet one other;  
All day we served her, and who shall serve by night?”  
Not knowing of thee, thy face not knowing, Oh mother,  
Oh light wherethrough the darkness is as light.

Men that forsook thee hast thou not forsaken,  
Races of men that knew not hast thou known;  
Nations that slept thou hast doubted not to waken,  
Worshippers of strange Gods to make thine own.

All old grey histories hiding thy clear features,  
Oh secret spirit and sovereign, all men’s tales,  
Creeds woven of men, thy children and thy creatures,  
They have woven for vestures of thee and for veils.

Thine hands, without election or exemption,  
Feed all men fainting from false peace or strife,  
Oh thou, the resurrection and redemption,  
The godhead and the manhood and the life.

Thy wings shadow the waters; thine eyes lighten  
The horror of the hollows of the night;  
The depths of the earth and the dark places brighten  
Under thy feet, whiter than fire is white.

Death is subdued to thee, and hell's bands broken;  
Where thou art only is heaven; who hears not thee,  
Time shall not hear him; when men's names are spoken,  
A nameless sign of death shall his name be.

Deathless shall be the death, the name be nameless;  
Sterile of stars his twilight time of breath;  
With fire of hell shall shame consume him shameless,  
And dying, all the night darken his death.

The years are as thy garments, the world's ages  
As sandals bound and loosed from thy swift feet;  
Time serves before thee, as one that hath for wages  
Praise or shame only, bitter words or sweet.

Thou sayest "Well done," and all a century kindles;  
Again, thou sayest, "Depart from sight of me,"  
And all the light of face of all men dwindleth,  
And the age is as the broken glass of thee.

The night is as a seal set on men's faces,  
On faces fallen of men that take no light,  
Nor give light in the deeps of the dark places,  
Blind things, incorporate with the body of night.

Their souls are serpents winterbound and frozen,  
Their shame is as a tame beast, at their feet  
Couched; their cold lips deride thee and thy chosen,  
Their lying lips made grey with dust for meat.

Then when their time is full and days run over,  
The splendour of thy sudden brow made bare  
Darkens the morning; thy bared hands uncover  
The veils of light and night and the awful air.

And the world naked as a new-born maiden  
Stands virginal and splendid as at birth,  
With all thine heaven of all its light unladen,  
Of all its love unburdened all thine earth.

For the utter earth and the utter air of heaven  
And the extreme depth is thine and the extreme height;  
Shadows of things and veils of ages riven  
Are as men's kings unkingdomed in thy sight.

Through the iron years, the centuries brazen-gated,  
By the ages' barred impenetrable doors,  
From the evening to the morning have we waited,  
Should thy foot haply sound on the awful floors.

The floors untrodden of the sun's feet glimmer,  
The star-unstricken pavements of the night;  
Do the lights burn inside? the lights wax dimmer  
On festal faces withering out of sight.

The crowned heads lose the light on them; it may be  
Dawn is at hand to smite the loud feast dumb;  
To bind the torch-lit centuries till the day be,  
The feasting kingdoms till thy kingdom come.

Shall it not come? deny they or dissemble,  
Is it not even as lightning from on high  
Now? and though many a soul close eyes, and tremble,  
How should they tremble at all who love thee as I?

I am thine harp between thine hands, Oh mother!  
All my strong chords are strained with love of thee.  
We grapple in love and wrestle, as each with other  
Wrestle the wind and the unreluctant sea.

I am no courtier of thee sober-suited,  
Who loves a little for a little pay.  
Me not thy winds and storms nor thrones disrooted,  
Nor molten crowns, nor thine own sins dismay.

Sinned hast thou sometime, therefore art thou sinless;  
Stained hast thou been, who art therefore without stain;  
Even as man's soul is kin to thee, but kinless  
Thou, in whose womb Time sows the all-various grain.

I do not bid thee spare me, Oh dreadful mother!  
I pray thee that thou spare not, of thy grace.  
How were it with me then, if ever another  
Should come to stand before thee in this my place?

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion  
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath;  
The graves of souls born worms and creeds grown carrion  
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organ-keys are thunders,  
And I beneath thy foot the pedal prest;  
Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,  
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,  
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line;  
But thou from dawn to sunsetting shalt cherish  
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

Reared between night and noon and truth and error,  
 Each twilight-travelling bird that trills and screams  
 Sickens at midday, nor can face for terror  
 The imperious heaven's inevitable extremes.

I have no spirit of skill with equal fingers  
 At sign to sharpen or to slacken strings;  
 I keep no time of song with gold-perched singers  
 And chirp of linnets on the wrists of kings.

I am thy storm-thrush of the days that darken,  
 Thy petrel in the foam that bears thy bark  
 To port through night and tempest; if thou hearken,  
 My voice is in thy heaven before the lark.

My song is in the mist that hides thy morning,  
 My cry is up before the day for thee;  
 I have heard thee and beheld thee and give warning,  
 Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and feathered fairer,  
 To see in summer what I see in spring;  
 I have eyes and heart to endure thee, Oh thunder-bearer,  
 And they shall be who shall have tongues to sing.

I have love at least, and have not fear, and part not  
 From thine unnavigable and wingless way;  
 Thou tarriest, and I have not said thou art not,  
 Nor all thy night long have denied thy day.

Darkness to daylight shall lift up thy pæan,  
 Hill to hill thunder, vale cry back to vale,  
 With wind-notes as of eagles Æschylean,  
 And Sappho singing in the nightingale.

Sung to by mighty sons of dawn and daughters,  
 Of this night's songs thine ear shall keep but one;  
 That supreme song which shook the channelled waters,  
 And called thee skyward as God calls the sun.

Come, though all heaven again be fire above thee;  
 Though death before thee come to clear thy sky;  
 Let us but see in his thy face who love thee;  
 Yea, though thou slay us, arise, and let us die.

### HERTHA.

I AM that which began;  
 Out of me the years roll;  
 Out of me God and man;  
 I am equal and whole;  
 God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I  
 am the soul.

Before ever land was,  
 Before ever the sea,  
 Or soft hair of the grass,  
 Or fair limbs of the tree,  
 Or the flesh-coloured fruit of my branches, I was, and thy  
 soul was in me.

First life on my sources  
 First drifted and swam;  
 Out of me are the forces  
 That save it or damn;  
 Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird:  
 before God was, I am.

Beside or above me  
 Nought is there to go;  
 Love or unlove me,  
 Unknow me or know,

I am that which unloves me and loves; I am stricken, and  
 I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed  
 And the arrows that miss,  
 I the mouth that is kissed  
 And the breath in the kiss,

The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and  
 the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses  
 My spirit elate;  
 That which caresses  
 With hands uncreate

My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the  
 measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,  
 Looking Godward, to cry  
 "I am I, thou art thou,  
 I am low, thou art high?"

I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou but  
 thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,  
 The plough-cloven clod  
 And the ploughshare drawn thorough,  
 The germ and the sod,  
 The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust  
 which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,  
 Child, underground?  
 Fire that impassioned thee,  
 Iron that bound,  
 Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou  
 known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart  
 Thou hast seen with thine eyes  
 With what cunning of art  
 Thou wast wrought in what wise,  
 By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown  
 on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,  
 Knowledge of me?  
 Has the wilderness told it thee?  
 Hast thou learnt of the sea?  
 Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds  
 taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star  
 To show light on thy brow  
 That thou sawest from afar  
 What I show to thee now?  
 Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the  
 mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?  
 What was, hast thou known?  
 Prophet nor poet  
 Nor tripod nor throne  
 Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother  
 alone.

Mother, not maker,  
 Born, and not made;  
 Though her children forsake her,  
 Allured or afraid,  
 Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not  
 for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,  
 And a crown is of night;  
 But this thing is God,  
 To be man with thy might,  
 To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out  
 thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,  
 As my soul in thee saith;  
 Give thou as I gave thee,  
 Thy life-blood and breath,  
 Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought,  
 and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving  
 As mine were to thee;  
 The free life of thy living,  
 Be the gift of it free;  
 Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou  
 give thee to me.

Oh children of banishment,  
 Souls overcast,  
 Were the lights ye see vanish meant  
 Alway to last,  
 Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and  
 stars overpast,

I that saw where ye trod  
 The dim paths of the night  
 Set the shadow called God  
 In your skies to give light;  
 But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless  
 soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted  
 That swells to the sky  
 With frondage red-fruited,  
 The life-tree am I;  
 In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye shall  
 live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion  
 That take and that give,  
 In their pity and passion  
 That scourge and forgive,  
 They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off;  
 they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches  
 The wounds in my bark;  
 Stars caught in my branches  
 Make day of the dark,  
 And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread  
 out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under  
 The live roots of the tree,  
 In my darkness the thunder  
 Makes utterance of me;  
 In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the  
 waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,  
As his feathers are spread  
And his feet set to climb  
Through the boughs overhead,  
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches  
are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages  
Blow through me and cease,  
The war-wind that rages,  
The spring-wind of peace,  
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my  
blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,  
All shadows and lights  
On the world's mountain-ranges  
And stream-riven heights,  
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-  
clouds on earth-shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,  
All works of all hands  
In unsearchable places  
Of time-stricken lands,  
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop  
through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden  
And more than ye know,  
And my growth have no guerdon  
But only to grow,  
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or death-  
worms below.

These too have their part in me,  
As I too in these;  
Such fire is at heart in me,  
Such sap is this tree's,  
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite  
lands and of seas.

In the spring-coloured hours  
When my mind was as May's  
There brake forth of me flowers  
By centuries of days,  
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out from  
my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing  
And smell of their shoots  
Were as warmth and sweet singing  
And strength to my roots;  
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom  
of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;  
I have need not of prayer;  
I have need of you free  
As your mouths of mine air;  
That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the  
fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is  
Of faiths ye espouse;  
In me only the root is  
That blooms in your boughs;  
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him with  
faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening  
 Abysses adored,  
 With dayspring and lightning  
 For lamp and for sword,  
 God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the  
 wrath of the Lord.

Oh my sons, Oh too dutiful  
 Toward Gods not of me,  
 Was not I enough beautiful?  
 Was it hard to be free?  
 For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look  
 forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,  
 With miracles shod,  
 With the fires of his thunders  
 For raiment and rod,  
 God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with the  
 terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,  
 His anguish is here;  
 And his spirits gaze dumb on him,  
 Grown grey from his fear;  
 And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his  
 infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,  
 Truth slays and forgives;  
 But to you, as time takes him,  
 This new thing it gives,  
 Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom  
 and lives.

For truth only is living,  
Truth only is whole,  
And the love of his giving  
Man's polestar and pole;  
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed  
of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;  
One beam of mine eye;  
One topmost blossom  
That scales the sky;  
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me,  
man that is I.

## THE SUNDEW.

A LITTLE marsh-plant, yellow green,  
And pricked at lip with tender red.  
Tread close, and either way you tread  
Some faint black water jets between  
Lest you should bruise the curious head.

A live thing may be; who shall know?  
The summer knows and suffers it;  
For the cool moss is thick and sweet  
Each side, and saves the blossom so  
That it lives out the long June heat.

The deep scent of the heather burns  
About it; breathless though it be,  
Bow down and worship; more than we  
Is the least flower whose life returns,  
Least weed renascent in the sea.

We are vexed and cumbered in earth's sight  
With wants, with many memories;  
These see their mother what she is,  
Glad-growing, till August leave more bright  
The apple-coloured cranberries.

Wind blows and bleaches the strong grass,  
Blown all one way to shelter it  
From trample of strayed kine, with feet  
Felt heavier than the moorhen was,  
Strayed up past patches of wild wheat.

You call it sundew: how it grows,  
If with its colour it have breath,  
If life taste sweet to it, if death  
Pain its soft petal, no man knows:  
Man has no sight or sense that saith.

My sundew, grown of gentle days,  
In these green miles the spring begun  
Thy growth ere April had half done  
With the soft secret of her ways  
Or June made ready for the sun.

Oh red-lipped mouth of marsh-flower,  
I have a secret halved with thee.  
The name that is love's name to me  
Thou knowest, and the face of her  
Who is my festival to see.

The hard sun, as thy petals knew,  
Coloured the heavy moss-water:  
Thou wert not worth green midsummer  
Nor fit to live to August blue,  
Oh sundew, not remembering her.

## ABOLAH.

I am the queen of Amalek.  
 There was no tender touch or fleck  
     To spoil my body or bared feet.  
 My words were soft like dulcimers,  
 And the first sweet of grape-flowers  
     Made each side of my bosom sweet.  
 My raiment was as tender fruit  
     Whose rind smells sweet of spice-tree root,  
     Bruised balm-blossom and budded wheat.

## AHINOAM.

I am the queen Ahinoam.  
 Like the throat of a soft slain lamb  
     Was my throat, softer veined than his:  
 My lips were as two grapes the sun  
     Lays his whole weight of heat upon  
     Like a mouth heavy with a kiss:  
 My hair's pure purple a wrought fleece,  
 My temples therein as a piece  
     Of a pomegranate's cleaving is.

## ATARAH.

I am the queen Sidonian.  
 My face made faint the face of man,  
     And strength was bound between my brows.  
 Spikenard was hidden in my ships,  
 Honey and wheat and myrrh in strips,  
     White wools that shine as colour does,  
 Soft linen dyed upon the fold,  
 Split spice and cores of scented gold,  
     Cedar and broken calamus.

## SEMIRAMIS.

I am the queen Semiramis.  
 The whole world, and the sea that is  
     In fashion like a chrysopras,  
 The noise of all men labouring,  
 The priest's mouth tired through thanksgiving,  
     The sound of love in the blood's pause,  
 The strength of love in the blood's beat,  
 All these were cast beneath my feet  
     And all found lesser than I was.

## HESIONE.

I am the queen Hesione.  
 The seasons that increased in me  
     Made my face fairer than all men's.  
 I had the summer in my hair;  
 And all the pale gold autumn air  
     Was as the habit of my sense.  
 My body was as fire that shone;  
 God's beauty that makes all things one  
     Was one among my handmaidens.

## CHRYSO THEMIS.

I am the queen of Samothrace.  
 God, making roses, made my face  
     As a rose filled up full with red.  
 My prows made sharp the straitened seas  
 From Pontus to that Chersonese  
     Whereon the ebbed Asian stream is shed.  
 My hair was as sweet scent that drips:  
 Love's breath begun about my lips  
     Kindled the lips of people dead.

## THOMYRIS.

I am the queen of Scythians.  
My strength was like no strength of man's,  
    My face like day, my breast like spring.  
My fame was felt in the extreme land  
That hath sunshine on the one hand,  
    And on the other star-shining.  
Yea, and the wind there fails of breath,  
Yea, and there life is waste like death;  
    Yea, and there death is a glad thing.

## HARHAS.

I am the queen of Anakim.  
In the spent years whose speech is dim,  
    Whose raiment is the dust and death,  
My stately body without stain  
Shone as the shining race of rain  
    Whose hair a great wind scattereth,  
Now hath God turned my lips to sighs,  
Plucked off mine eyelids from mine eyes,  
And sealed with seals my way of breath.

## MYRRHA.

I am the queen Arabian.  
The tears wherewith mine eyelids ran  
    Smelt like my perfumed eyelids' smell.  
A harsh thirst made my soft mouth hard,  
That ached with kisses afterward;  
    My brain rang like a beaten bell.  
As tears on eyes, as fire on wood,  
Sin fed upon my breath and blood,  
    Sin made my breasts subside and swell.

## PASIPHAE.

I am the queen Pasiphae.  
Not all the pure clean-coloured sea  
    Could cleanse or cool my yearning veins;  
Nor any root nor herb that grew,  
Flag-leaves that let green water through,  
    Nor washing of the dews and rains.  
From shame's pressed core I wrung the sweet  
Fruit's savour that was death to eat,  
    Whereof no seed but death remains.

## SAPPHO.

I am the queen of Lesbians.  
My love, that had no part in man's,  
    Was sweeter than all shape of sweet.  
The intolerable infinite desire  
Made my face pale like faded fire  
    When the ashen pyre falls through with heat.  
My blood was hot wan wine of love,  
And my song's sound the sound thereof,  
    The sound of the delight of it.

## MESSALINA.

I am the queen of Italy.  
These were the signs God set on me;  
    A barren beauty subtle and sleek,  
Curled carven hair, and cheeks worn wan  
With fierce false lips of many a man,  
    Large temples where the blood ran weak,  
A mouth athirst and amorous  
And hungering as the grave's mouth does  
    That, being an-hungered, cannot speak.

## AMESTRIS.

I am the queen of Persians.  
 My breasts were lordlier than bright swans,  
     My body as amber fair and thin.  
 Strange flesh was given my lips for bread,  
 With poisonous hours my days were fed,  
     And my feet shod with adder skin.  
 In Shushan toward Ecbatane  
 I wrought my joys with tears and pain,  
     My loves with blood and bitter sin.

## EPHRATH.

I am the queen of Rephaim.  
 God, that some while refraineth him,  
     Made in the end a spoil of me.  
 My rumour was upon the world  
 As strong sound of swoln water hurled  
     Through porches of the straining sea.  
 My hair was like the flag-flower,  
 And my breasts carven goodlier  
     Than beryl with chalcedony.

## PASITHEA.

I am the queen of Cypriotes.  
 Mine oarsmen, labouring with brown throats,  
     Sang of me many a tender thing.  
 My maidens, girdled loose and braced  
 With gold from bosom to white waist,  
     Praised me between their wool-combing.  
 All that praise Venus all night long  
 With lips like speech and lids like song  
     Praised me till song lost heart to sing.

## ALACIEL.

I am the queen Alaciel.  
My mouth was like that moist gold cell  
    Whereout the thickest honey drips.  
Mine eyes were as a grey-green sea;  
The amorous blood that smote on me  
    Smote to my feet and finger-tips.  
My throat was whiter than the dove,  
Mine eyelids as the seals of love,  
    And as the doors of love my lips.

## ERIGONE.

I am the queen Erigone.  
The wild wine shed as blood on me  
    Made my face brighter than a bride's.  
My large lips had the old thirst of earth,  
Mine arms the might of the old sea's girth  
    Bound round the whole world's iron sides.  
Within mine eyes and in mine ears  
Were music and the wine of tears,  
    And light, and thunder of the tides.

## AT PARTING.

FOR a day and night Love sang to us, played with us,  
Folded us round from the dark and the light,  
And our hearts were fulfilled of the music he made with us,  
Made with our hearts and our lips while he stayed with us,  
Stayed in mid passage his pinions from flight  
For a day and a night.

From his foes that kept watch with his wings had he  
hidden us,  
Covered us close from the eyes that would smite,  
From the feet that had tracked and the tongues that had  
hidden us  
Sheltering in shade of the myrtles forbidden us  
Spirit and flesh growing one with delight  
For a day and a night.

But his wings will not rest and his feet will not stay for us:  
Morning is here in the joy of its might;  
With his breath has he sweetened a night and a day for us;  
Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way for us;  
Love can but last in us here at his height  
For a day and a night.

## ROCOCO.

TAKE hands, and part with laughter;  
Touch lips, and part with tears;  
Once more and no more after,  
Whatever comes with years.  
We twain shall not remeasure  
The ways that left us twain;  
Nor crush the lees of pleasure  
From sanguine grapes of pain.

We twain once well in sunder,  
What will the mad gods do  
For hate with me, I wonder,  
Or what for love with you?  
Forget them till November,  
And dream there's April yet;  
Forget that I remember,  
And dream that I forgot.

Time found our tired love sleeping,  
And kissed away his breath;  
But what should we do weeping,  
Though light love sleep to death?

We have drained his lips at leisure,  
Till there's not left to drain  
A single sob of pleasure,  
A single pulse of pain.

Dream that the lips once breathless  
Might quicken if they would;  
Say that the soul is deathless;  
Dream that the gods are good;  
Say March may wed September,  
And time divorce regret;  
But not that you remember,  
And not that I forget.

We have heard from hidden places  
What love scarce lives and hears;  
We have seen on fervent faces  
The pallor of strange tears;  
We have trod the wine-vat's treasure,  
Whence, ripe to steam and stain,  
Foams round the feet of pleasure  
The blood-red must of pain.

Remembrance may recover  
And time bring back to time  
The name of your first lover,  
The ring of my first rhyme;  
But rose-leaves of December  
The frosts of June shall fret,  
The day that you remember,  
The day that I forget.

The snake that hides and hisses  
    In heaven we twain have known;  
The grief of cruel kisses,  
    The joy whose mouth makes moan,  
The pulse's pause and measure,  
    Where in one furtive vein  
Throbs through the heart of pleasure  
    The purpler blood of pain.

We have done with tears and treasons  
    And love for treason's sake;  
Room for the swift new seasons,  
    The years that burn and break,  
Dismantle and dismember  
    Men's days and dreams, Juliette;  
For love may not remember,  
    But time will not forget.

Life treads down love in flying,  
    Time withers him at root;  
Bring all dead things and dying,  
    Reaped sheaf and ruined fruit,  
Where, crushed by three days' pressure  
    Our three days' love lies slain;  
And earlier leaf of pleasure,  
    And latter flower of pain,

Breathe close upon the ashes,  
    It may be flame will leap;  
Unclose the soft close lashes,  
    Lift up the lids, and weep:

Light love's extinguished ember,  
    Let one tear leave it wet,  
For one that you remember  
    And ten that you forget.

### HOPE AND FEAR.

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,  
    With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,  
Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer  
Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men grope  
Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can ope,  
    And makes for joy the very darkness dear  
That gives her wide wings play; nor dreams that fear  
At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.  
Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,  
May truth first purge her eyesight to discern  
    What once being known leaves time no power to  
appal;  
Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn  
    The kind wise word that falls from years that fall—  
“Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all.”

## REMEMBRANCE AND REGRET.

(From "Hesperia.")

OUR of the golden remote wild west where the sea without shore is,  
Full of the sunset, and sad, if at all, with the fulness of joy,  
As a wind sets in with the autumn that blows from the region of stories,  
Blows with a perfume of songs and of memories beloved from a boy,  
Blows from the capes of the past oversea to the bays of the present,  
Filled as with shadow of sound with the pulse of invisible feet,  
Far out to the shallows and straits of the future, by rough ways or pleasant,  
Is it thither the wind's wings beat? is it hither to me,  
    Oh my sweet?  
For thee, in the stream of the deep tide-wind blowing in with the water,  
Thee I behold as a bird borne in with the wind from the west,  
Straight from the sunset, across white waves whence rose as a daughter

Venus thy mother, in years when the world was a water  
at rest.  
Out of the distance of dreams, as a dream that abides  
after slumber,  
Strayed from the fugitive flock of the night, when the  
moon overhead  
Wanes in the wan waste heights of the heaven, and stars  
without number  
Die without sound, and are spent like lamps that are  
burnt by the dead,  
Comes back to me, stays by me, lulls me with touch of  
forgotten caresses,  
One warm dream clad about with a fire as of life that  
endures;  
The delight of thy face, and the sound of thy feet, and  
the wind of thy tresses,  
And all of a man that regrets, and all of a maid that  
allures.

\* \* \* \* \*

## A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND.

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,  
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;  
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,  
Under the roses I hid my heart.  
Why would it sleep not? why should it start,  
When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?  
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?  
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,  
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;  
Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,  
And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.  
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?  
Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?  
What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?  
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,  
It never was writ in the traveller's chart,  
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,  
It never was sold in the merchant's mart.

The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,  
And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;  
No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,  
Only the song of a secret bird.

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,  
To sleep for a season and hear no word  
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,  
Only the song of a secret bird.

II.

I, last least voice of her voices,  
Give thanks that were mute in me long  
To the soul in my soul that rejoices  
For the song that is over my song.  
Time gives what he gains for the giving  
Or takes for his tribute of me;  
My dreams to the wind everliving,  
My song to the sea.

### IN THE WATER.

THE sea is awake, and the sound of the song of the joy  
of her waking is rolled  
From afar to the star that recedes, from anear to the  
wastes of the wild wide shore.  
Her call is a trumpet compelling us homeward: if dawn  
in her east be acold,  
From the sea shall we crave not her grace to rekindle the  
life that it kindled before,  
Her breath to requicken, her bosom to rock us, her kisses  
to bless as of yore?  
For the wind, with his wings half open, at pause in the  
sky, neither fettered nor free,  
Leans waveward and flutters the ripple to laughter: and  
fain would the twain of us be  
Where lightly the wave yearns forward from under the  
curve of the deep dawn's dome,  
And, full of the morning and fired with the pride of the  
glory thereof and the glee,  
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and  
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Life holds not an hour that is better to live in: the past  
is a tale that is told,  
The future a sun-flecked shadow, alive and asleep, with a  
blessing in store.  
As we give us again to the waters, the rapture of limbs  
that the waters enfold  
Is less than the rapture of spirit whereby, though the  
burden it quits were sore,  
Our souls and the bodies they wield at their will are  
absorbed in the life they adore—  
In the life that endures no burden, and bows not the fore-  
head, and bends not the knee—  
In the life everlasting of earth and of heaven, in the laws  
that atone and agree,  
In the measureless music of things, in the fervour of  
forces that rest or that roam,  
That cross and return and reissue, as I after you and as  
you after me  
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and  
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

For, albeit he were less than the least of them, haply the  
heart of a man may be bold  
To rejoice in the word of the sea as a mother's that saith  
to the son she bore,  
Child, was not the life in thee mine, and my spirit the  
breath in thy lips from of old?  
Have I let not thy weakness exult in my strength, and  
thy foolishness learn of my lore?  
Have I helped not or healed not thine anguish, or made  
not the might of thy gladness more?

And surely his heart should answer, The light of the love  
of my life is in thee.  
She is fairer than earth, and the sun is not fairer, the  
wind is not blither than she:  
From my youth hath she shown me the joy of her bays  
that I crossed, of her cliffs that I climb,  
Till now that the twain of us here, in desire of the dawn  
and in trust of the sea,  
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and be-  
seeches, athirst for the foam.

Friend, earth is a harbour of refuge for winter, a covert  
whereunder to flee  
When day is the vassal of night, and the strength of the  
hosts of her mightier than he;  
But here is the presence adored of me, here my desire is  
at rest and at home.  
There are cliffs to be climbed upon land, there are ways  
to be trodden and ridden: but we  
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and be-  
seeches, athirst for the foam.

## BY THE NORTH SEA.

## I.

A LAND that is lonelier than ruin;  
A sea that is stranger than death;  
Far fields that a rose never blew in,  
Wan waste where the winds lack breath;  
Waste endless and boundless and flowerless  
But of marsh-blossoms fruitless as free;  
Where earth lies exhausted, as powerless  
To strive with the sea.

Far flickers the flight of the swallows,  
Far flutters the west of the grass  
Spun dense over desolate hollows  
More pale than the clouds as they pass;  
Thick woven as the web of a witch is  
Round the heart of a thrall that hath sinned,  
Whose youth and the wrecks of its riches  
Are waifs on the wind.

The pastures are herdless and sheepless,  
No pasture or shelter for herds:  
The wind is relentless and sleepless,  
And restless and songless the birds;

Their cries from afar fall breathless,  
 Their wings are as lightnings that flee;  
 For the land has two lords that are deathless:  
 Death's self, and the sea.

These twain, as a king with his fellow,  
 Hold converse of desolate speech:  
 And her waters are haggard and yellow  
 And crass with the scurf of the beach:  
 And his garments are grey as the hoary  
 Wan sky where the day lies dim;  
 And his power is to her, and his glory,  
 As hers unto him.

In the pride of his power she rejoices,  
 In her glory he glows and is glad:  
 In her darkness the sound of his voice is,  
 With his breath she dilates and is mad:  
 "If thou slay me, Oh death, and outlive me,  
 Yet thy love hath fulfilled me of thee."  
 "Shall I give thee not back if thou give me,  
 Oh sister, Oh sea?"

And year upon year dawns living,  
 And age upon age drops dead:  
 And his hand is not weary of giving,  
 And the thirst of her heart is not fed:  
 And the hunger that moans in her passion,  
 And the rage in her hunger that roars,  
 As a wolf's that the winter lays lash on,  
 Still calls and implores.

Her walls have no granite for girder,  
    No fortalice fronting her stands:  
But reefs the bloodguiltiest of murder  
    Are less than the banks of her sands:  
These number their slain by the thousand;  
    For the ship hath no surety to be,  
When the bank is abreast of her bows and  
    Aflush with the sea.

No surety to stand, and no shelter  
    To dawn out of darkness but one,  
Out of waters that hurtle and welter  
    No succour to dawn with the sun  
But a rest from the wind as it passes,  
    Where, hardly redeemed from the waves,  
Lie thick as the blades of the grasses  
    The dead in their graves.

A multitude noteless of numbers,  
    As wild weeds cast on an heap:  
And sounder than sleep are their slumbers,  
    And softer than song is their sleep;  
And sweeter than all things and stranger  
    The sense, if perchance it may be,  
That the wind is divested of danger  
    And scatheless the sea.

That the roar of the banks they breasted  
    Is hurtless as bellowing of herds,  
And the strength of his wings that invested  
    The wind, as the strength of a bird's;

As the sea-mew's might or the swallow's  
 That cry to him back if he cries,  
 As over the graves and their hollows  
 Days darken and rise.

As the souls of the dead men disburdened  
 And clean of the sins that they sinned,  
 With a lovelier than man's life guerdoned,  
 And delight as a wave's in the wind,  
 And delight as the wind's in the billow,  
 Birds pass, and deride with their glee  
 The flesh that has dust for its pillow  
 As wrecks have the sea.

When the ways of the sun wax dimmer,  
 Wings flash through the dusk like beams;  
 As the clouds in the lit sky glimmer,  
 The bird in the graveyard gleams;  
 As the cloud at its wing's edge whitens  
 When the clarions of sunrise are heard,  
 The graves that the bird's note brightens  
 Grow bright for the bird.

As the waves of the numberless waters  
 That the wind cannot number who guides  
 Are the sons of the shore and the daughters  
 Here lulled by the chime of the tides:  
 And here in the press of them standing  
 We know not if these or if we  
 Live truest, or anchored to landing  
 Or drifted to sea.

In the valley he named of decision  
    No denser were multitudes met  
When the soul of the seer in her vision  
    Saw nations for doom of them set;  
Saw darkness in dawn, and the splendour  
    Of judgment, the sword and the rod:  
But the doom here of death is more tender  
    And gentler the God.

And gentler the wind from the dreary  
    Sea-banks by the waves overlapped,  
Being weary, speaks peace to the weary  
    From slopes that the tide-stream hath sapped;  
And sweeter than all that we call so  
    The seat of their slumber shall be  
Till the graves that embosom them also  
    Be sapped of the sea.

## II.

## I.

For the heart of the waters is cruel,  
    And the kisses are dire of their lips,  
And their waves are as fire is to fuel  
    To the strength of the seafaring ships,  
Though the sea's eye gleam as a jewel  
    To the sun's eye back as he dips.

## 2.

Though the sun's eye flash to the sea's  
Live light of delight and of laughter,  
And her lips breathe back to the breeze  
The kiss that the wind's lips waft her  
From the sun that subsides, and sees  
No gleam of the storm's dawn after.

## 3.

And the wastes of the wild sea-marches  
Where the borderers are matched in their might—  
Bleak fens that the sun's weight parches,  
Dense waves that reject his light—  
Change under the change-coloured arches  
Of changeless morning and night.

## 4.

The waves are as ranks enrolled  
Too close for the storm to sever:  
The fens lie naked and cold,  
But their heart fails utterly never:  
The lists are set from of old,  
And the warfare endureth forever.

## IN THE SALT MARSHES.

MILES, and miles, and miles of desolation!  
Leagues on leagues on leagues without a change!  
Sign or token of some eldest nation  
Here would make the strange land not so strange.  
Time-forgotten, yea since time's creation,  
Seem these borders where the sea-birds range.

Slowly, gladly, full of peace and wonder  
Grows his heart who journeys here alone.  
Earth and all its thoughts of earth sink under  
Deep as deep in water sinks a stone.  
Hardly knows it if the rollers thunder,  
Hardly whence the lonely wind is blown.

Tall the plumage of the rush-flower tosses,  
Sharp and soft in many a curve and line  
Gleam and glow the sea-coloured marsh-mosses,  
Salt and splendid from the circling brine.  
Streak on streak of glimmering seashine crosses  
All the land sea-saturate as with wine.

Far, and far between, in divers orders,  
Clear grey steeples cleave the low grey sky;  
Fast and firm as time-unshaken warders,  
Hearts made sure by faith, by hope made high.  
These alone in all the wild sea-borders  
Fear no blast of days and nights that die.

All the land is like as one man's face is,  
Pale and troubled still with change of cares.  
Doubt and death pervade her clouded spaces:  
Strength and length of life and peace are theirs;  
Theirs alone amid these weary places,  
Seeing not how the wild world frets and fares.

Firm and fast where all is cloud that changes,  
Cloud-clogged sunlight, cloud by sunlight thinned,  
Stern and sweet, above the sand-hill ranges  
Watch the towers and tombs of men that sinned  
Once, now calm as earth whose only change is  
Wind, and light, and wind, and cloud, and wind.

Out and in and out the sharp straits wander,  
In and out and in the wild way strives,  
Starred and paved and lined with flowers that squander  
Gold as golden as the gold of hives,  
Salt and moist and multiform: but yonder,  
See, what sign of life or death survives?

Seen then only when the songs of olden  
Harps were young whose echoes yet endure,  
Hymned of Homer when his years were golden,  
Known of only when the world was pure,  
Here is Hades, manifest, beholden,  
Surely, surely here, if aught be sure!

Where the border-line was crossed, that, sundering  
Death from life, keeps weariness from rest,  
None can tell, who fares here forward wondering;  
None may doubt but here might end his quest.  
Here life's lightning joys and woes once thundering  
Sea-like round him cease like storm suppressed.

Here the wise wave-wandering steadfast-hearted  
Guest of many a lord of many a land  
Saw the shape or shade of years departed,  
Saw the semblance risen and hard at hand,  
Saw the mother long from love's reach parted,  
Anticleia, like a statue stand.

Statue? nay, nor tissued image woven  
Fair on hangings in his father's hall;  
Nay, too fast her faith of heart was proven,  
Far too firm her loveliest love of all;  
Love wherethrough the loving heart was cloven,  
Love that hears not when the loud Fates call.

Love that lives and stands up re-created  
Then when life has ebbed and anguish fled;  
Love more strong than death or all things fated,  
Child's and mother's, lit by love and led;  
Love that found what life so long awaited  
Here, when life came down among the dead.

Here, where never came alive another,  
Came her son across the sundering tide  
Crossed before by many a warrior brother  
Once that warred on Ilion at his side;  
Here spread forth vain hands to clasp the mother  
Dead, that sorrowing for his love's sake died.

Parted, though by narrowest of divisions,  
Clasp he might not, only might implore,  
Sundered yet by bitterest of derisions,  
Son, and mother from the son she bore—  
Here? But all dispeopled here of visions  
Lies, forlorn of shadows even, the shore.

All too sweet such men's Hellenic speech is,  
All too faint they lived of light to see,  
Once to see the darkness of these beaches,  
Once to sing this Hades found of me  
Ghostless, all its gulfs and creeks and reaches,  
Sky, and shore, and cloud, and waste, and sea.

## OFF SHORE.

WHEN the might of the summer  
Is most on the sea;  
When the days overcome her  
With joy but to be,  
With rapture of royal enchantment, and sorcery that sets  
her not free,

But for hours upon hours  
As a thrall she remains  
Spell-bound as with flowers  
And content in their chains,  
And her loud steeds fret not, and lift not a lock of their  
deep white manes;

Then only, far under  
In the depths of her hold,  
Some gleam of its wonder  
Man's eye may behold,  
Its wild-weed forests of crimson and russet and olive and  
gold.

Still deeper and dimmer  
And goodlier they glow  
For the eyes of the swimmer  
Who scans them below  
As he crosses the zone of their flowerage that knows not  
of sunshine and snow.

Soft blossomless frondage  
 And foliage that gleams  
 As to prisoners in bondage  
 The light of their dreams,  
 The desire of a dawn unbeholden, with hope on the wings  
 of its beams.

Not as prisoners entombed  
 Waxen haggard and wizen,  
 But consoled and illumined  
 In the depths of their prison  
 With delight of the light everlasting and vision of dawn  
 on them risen,

From the banks and the beds  
 Of the waters divine  
 They lift up their heads  
 And the flowers of them shine  
 Through the splendour of darkness that clothes them, of  
 water that glimmers like wine.

Bright bank over bank  
 Making glorious the gloom,  
 Soft rank upon rank,  
 Strange bloom after bloom,  
 They kindle the liquid low twilight, the dusk of the dim  
 sea's womb.

Through the subtle and tangible  
 Gloom without form,  
 Their branches, infrangible  
 Ever of storm,  
 Spread softer their sprays than the shoots of the **woodian**  
 when April is warm.

As the flight of the thunder, full  
Charged with its word,  
Dividing the wonderful  
Depths like a bird,

Speaks wrath and delight to the heart of the night that  
exults to have heard,

So swiftly, though soundless  
In silence's ear,  
Light, winged from the boundless  
Blue depths full of cheer,

Speaks joy to the heart of the waters that part not before  
him, but hear.

Light, perfect and visible  
Godhead of God,  
God indivisible,  
Lifts but his rod,

And the shadows are scattered in sunder, and darkness  
is light at his nod.

At the touch of his wand,  
At the nod of his head  
From the spaces beyond  
Where the dawn hath her bed,

Earth, water, and air are transfigured, and rise as one  
risen from the dead.

He puts forth his hand,  
And the mountains are thrilled  
To the heart as they stand  
In his presence, fulfilled

With his glory that utters his grace upon earth, and her  
sorrows are stilled.

The moan of her travail  
That groans for the light  
Till dayspring unravel  
The west of the night,  
At the sound of the strings of the music of morning, falls  
dumb with delight.

He gives forth his word,  
And the word that he saith,  
Ere well it be heard,  
Strikes darkness to death;  
For the thought of his heart is the sunrise, and dawn as  
the sound of his breath.

And the strength of its pulses  
That passion makes proud  
Confounds and convulses  
The depths of the cloud  
Of the darkness that heaven was engirt with, divided and  
rent as a shroud,

As the veil of the shrine  
Of the temple of old  
When darkness divine  
Over noonday was rolled;  
So the heart of the night by the pulse of the light is con-  
vulsed and controlled.

And the sea's heart, groaning  
For glories withdrawn,  
And the waves' mouths, moaning  
All night for the dawn,  
Are uplift as the hearts and the mouths of the singers on  
leaside and lawn.

And the sound of the quiring  
Of all these as one,  
Desired and desiring  
Till dawn's will be done,  
Fills full with delight of them heaven till it burns as the  
heart of the sun.

Till the waves too inherit  
And waters take part  
In the sense of the spirit  
That breathes from his heart,  
And are kindled with music as fire when the lips of the  
morning part,

With music unheard  
In the light of her lips,  
In the life-giving word  
Of the dewfall that drips  
On the grasses of earth, and the wind that enkindles the  
wings of the ships:

White glories of wings  
As of seafaring birds  
That flock from the springs  
Of the sunrise in herds  
With the wind for a herdsman, and hasten or halt at the  
change of his words:

At the watchword's change  
When the wind's note shifts,  
And the skies grow strange,  
And the white squall drifts  
Up sharp from the sea-line, vexing the sea till the low  
cloud lifts.

At the charge of his word  
    Bidding pause, bidding haste,  
When the ranks are stirred  
    And the lines displaced,  
They scatter as wild swans parting adrift on the wan  
green waste.

At the hush of his word  
    In a pause of his breath  
When the waters have heard  
    His will that he saith,  
They stand as a flock penned close in its fold for division  
of death.

As a flock by division  
    Of death to be thinned,  
As the shades in a vision  
    Of spirits that sinned:  
So glimmer their shrouds and their sheetings as clouds on  
the stream of the wind.

But the sun stands fast,  
    And the sea burns bright,  
And the flight of them past  
    Is no more than the flight  
Of the snow-soft swarm of serene wings poised and afloat  
in the light.

Like flowers upon flowers  
    In a festival way  
When hours after hours  
    Shed grace on the day,  
White blossomlike butterflies hover and gleam through the  
snows of the spray.

Like snow-coloured petals  
 Of blossoms that flee  
 From storm that unsettles  
 The flower as the tree,  
 They flutter, a legion of flowers on the wing, through the  
 field of the sea.

Through the furrowless field  
 Where the foam-blossoms blow  
 And the secrets are sealed  
 Of their harvest below  
 They float in the path of the sunbeams, as flakes or as  
 blossoms of snow.

Till the sea's ways darken,  
 And the God, withdrawn,  
 Give ear not nor hearken  
 If prayer on him fawn,  
 And the sun's self seem but a shadow, the noon as a  
 ghost of the dawn.

No shadow, but rather  
 God, father of song,  
 Shew grace to me, Father  
 God, loved of me long,  
 That I lose not the light of thy face, that my trust in thee  
 work me not wrong.

While yet I make forward  
 With face toward thee  
 Not turned yet in shoreward,  
 Be thine upon me;  
 Be thy light on my forehead or ever I turn it again from  
 the sea.

As a kiss on my brow  
 Be the light of thy grace,  
 Be thy glance on me now  
 From the pride of thy place:  
 As the sign of a sire to a son be the light on my face of  
 thy face.

Thou wast father of olden  
 Times hailed and adored,  
 And the sense of thy golden  
 Great harp's monochord  
 Was the joy in the soul of the singers that hailed thee  
 for master and lord.

Fair father of all  
 In thy ways that have trod,  
 That have risen at thy call,  
 That have thrilled at thy nod,  
 Arise, shine, lighten upon me, Oh sun that we see to be  
 God.

As my soul has been dutiful  
 Only to thee,  
 Oh God most beautiful,  
 Lighten thou me,  
 As I swim through the dim long rollers, with eyelids up-  
 lift from the sea.

Be praised and adored of us  
 All in accord,  
 Father and lord of us  
 Alway adored,  
 The slayer and the stayer and the harper, the light of us  
 all and our lord.

At the sound of thy lyre,  
At the touch of thy rod,  
Air quickens to fire  
By the foot of thee trod,  
The saviour and healer and singer, the living and visible  
God.

The years are before thee  
As shadows of thee,  
As men that adore thee,  
As cloudlets that flee:  
But thou art the God, and thy kingdom is heaven, and  
thy shrine is the sea.

## IN A GUERNSEY BAY.

## I.

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,  
What new delight of waters, may this be,  
The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned  
My mother sea?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee,  
Who hast my soul for ever: cliff and sand  
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand  
Strike out from shore: more close it brings to me,  
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,  
My mother sea.

## II.

Across and along, as the bay's breadth opens, and  
o'er us  
Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and  
strong  
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten before us  
Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not wrong;  
The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's chorus;  
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the song?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that wore us,  
We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that throng,  
Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us  
Across and along.

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## SHADOW, SILENCE, AND THE SEA.

ALL night long, in the world of sleep,  
Skies and waters were soft and deep:  
Shadow clothed them, and silence made  
Soundless music of dream and shade:  
All above us, the livelong night,  
Shadow, kindled with sense of light;  
All around us, the brief night long,  
Silence, laden with sense of song.  
Stars and mountains without, we knew,  
Watched and waited, the soft night through:  
All unseen, but divined and dear,  
Thrilled the touch of the sea's breath near:  
All unheard, but alive like sound,  
Throbbed the sense of the sea's life round:  
Round us, near us, in depth and height,  
Soft as darkness and keen as light.

## ON THE VERGE.

HERE begins the sea that ends not till the world's end.  
Where we stand,  
Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond these  
waves that gleam,  
We should know what never man hath known, nor eye of  
man hath scanned.  
Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt like fume  
of shrines that steam  
Breaks or stays the strength of waters till they pass our  
bounds of dream.  
Where the waste Land's End leans westward, all the seas  
it watches roll  
Find their border fixed beyond them, and a worldwide  
shore's control:  
These whereby we stand no shore beyond us limits:  
these are free.  
Gazing hence, we see the water that grows iron round  
the Pole,  
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all  
the sea.

Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes; here on  
land  
Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews  
that plunge and scream.

Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive strand  
Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and dies: and scarce they seem  
More than motes that thronged and trembled in the brief noon's breath and beam.  
Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like sound of bells that toll,  
Some with sighing and laughing, some with words that blessed and made us whole,  
Passed, and left us, and we know not what they were, nor what were we.  
Would we know, being mortal? Never breath of answering whisper stole  
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness? Ere our eyes and brows be fanned  
Round with airs of twilight, washed with dews from sleep's eternal stream,  
Would we know sleep's guarded secret? Ere the fire consume the brand,  
Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken? yet we deem  
Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her starry team,  
What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be not: yea, the scroll  
Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of peace or doom of dole.  
Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the gloom with venturous glee,

Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbour, rock  
nor shoal,  
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all  
the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have life or life have  
death for goal?  
Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor skies  
unroll  
What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall alway  
be.  
Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on the  
soul  
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all  
the sea.

## A FORSAKEN GARDEN.

IN a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,  
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,  
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,  
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.  
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses  
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed  
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses  
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,  
To the low last edge of the long lone land.  
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,  
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?  
So long have the grey bare walks lain guestless,  
Through branches and briars if a man make way,  
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless  
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled  
That crawls by a track none turn to climb  
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled  
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.

The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;  
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.  
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,  
These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not;  
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are  
dry;  
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls  
not,  
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.  
Over the meadows that blossom and wither  
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song;  
Only the sun and the rain come hither  
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels  
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.  
Only the wind here hovers and revels  
In a round where life seems barren as death.  
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping.  
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,  
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping  
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"  
Did he whisper? "look forth from the flowers to the  
sea;  
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms  
wither,  
And men that love lightly may die—but we?"

And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,  
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,  
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had  
lightened,  
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?  
And were one to the end; but what end who knows?  
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,  
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.  
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love  
them?  
What love was ever as deep as a grave?  
They are loveless now as the grass above them  
Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,  
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.  
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers  
In the air now soft with a summer to be.  
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter  
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or  
weep,  
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter  
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever;  
Here change may come not till all change end.  
From the graves they have made they shall rise up  
never,  
Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.

Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,  
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be;  
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing  
    Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,  
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,  
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble  
    The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,  
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,  
    Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,  
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,  
    Death lies dead.

## A SWIMMER'S DREAM.

NOVEMBER 4, 1889.

*Somno mollior unda.*

## I.

DAWN is dim on the dark soft water,  
Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.  
Love's own self was the deep sea's daughter,  
Fair and flawless from face to feet,  
Hailed of all when the world was golden,  
Loved of lovers whose names beholden  
Thrill men's eyes as with light of olden  
Days more glad than their flight was fleet.

So they sang: but for men that love her,  
Souls that hear not her word in vain,  
Earth beside her and heaven above her  
Seem but shadows that wax and wane.  
Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses,  
Kinder than love's that betrays and blesses,  
Blither than spring's when her flowerful tresses  
Shake forth sunlight and shine with rain.

All the strength of the waves that perish  
Swells beneath me and laughs and sighs,  
Sighs for love of the life they cherish,  
Laughs to know that it lives and dies,

Dies for joy of its life, and lives  
Thrilled with joy that its brief death gives—  
Death whose laugh or whose breath forgives  
Change that bids it subside and rise.

## II.

Hard and heavy, remote but nearing,  
Sunless hangs the severe sky's weight,  
Cloud on cloud, though the wind be veering  
Heaped on high to the sundawn's gate.  
Dawn and even and noon are one,  
Veiled with vapour and void of sun;  
Nought in sight or in fancied hearing  
Now less mighty than time or fate.

The grey sky gleams and the grey seas glimmer,  
Pale and sweet as a dream's delight,  
As a dream's where darkness and light seem dimmer,  
Touched by dawn or subdued by night.  
The dark wind, stern and sublime and sad,  
Swings the rollers to westward, clad  
With lustrous shadow that lures the swimmer,  
Lures and lulls him with dreams of light.

Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder,  
Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud,  
Fill the world of the skies whereunder  
Heaves and quivers and pants aloud

All the world of the waters, hoary  
Now, but clothed with its own live glory,  
That mates the lightning and mocks the thunder  
With light more living and word more proud.

## III.

A dream, a dream is it all—the season,  
The sky, the water, the wind, the shore?  
A day-born dream of divine unreason,  
A marvel moulded of sleep—no more?  
For the cloudlike wave that my limbs while cleaving  
Feel as in slumber beneath them heaving  
Soothes the sense as to slumber, leaving  
Sense of nought that was known of yore.

A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,  
A peace more happy than lives on land,  
Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure  
The dreaming head and the steering hand.  
I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,  
The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,  
And close mine eyes for delight past measure,  
And wish the wheel of the world would stand.

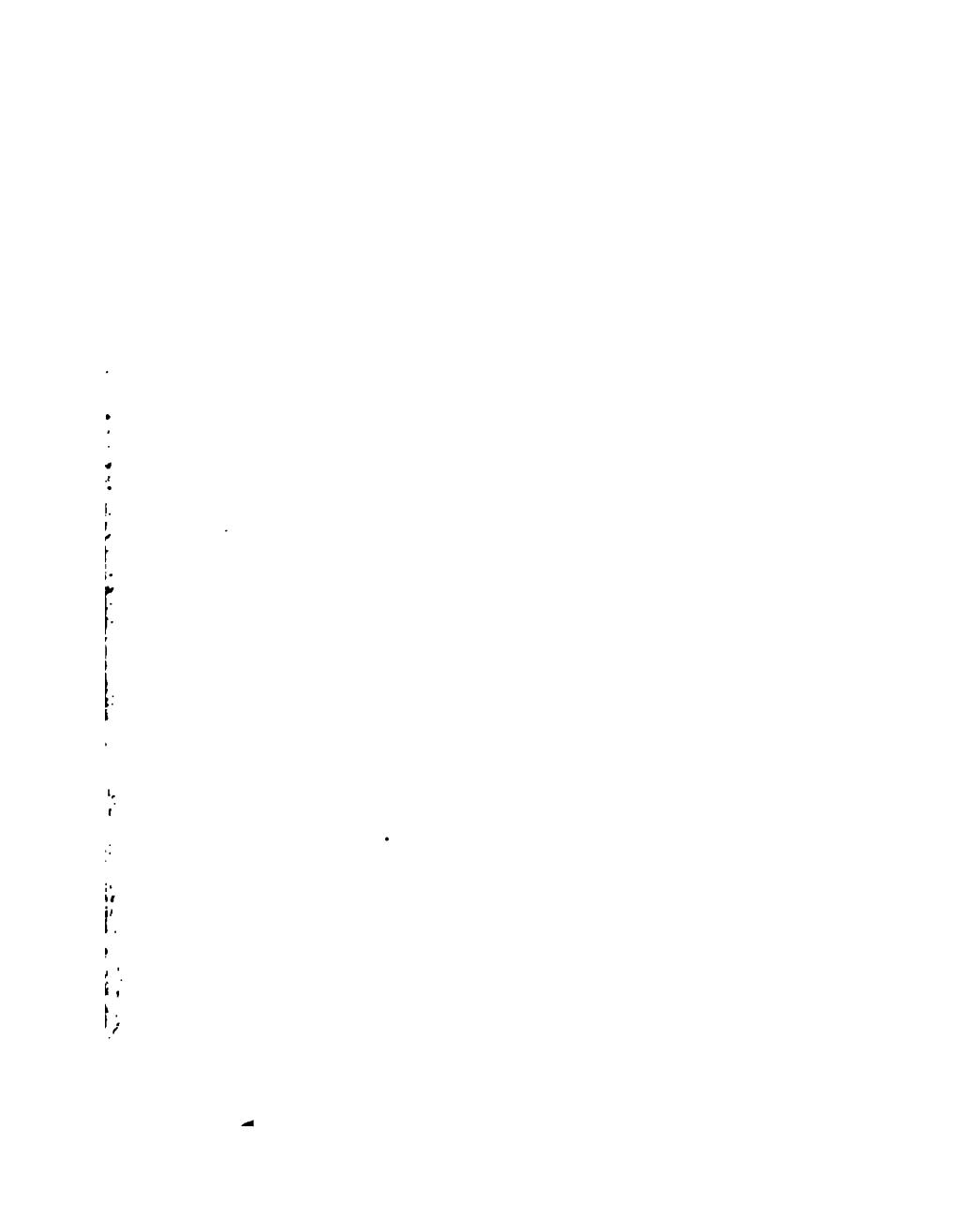
The wild-winged hour that we fain would capture  
Fall as from heaven that its light feet clomb,  
So brief, so soft, and so full the rapture  
Was felt that soothed me with sense of home.

To sleep, to swim, and to dream, for ever—  
Such joy the vision of man saw never;  
For here too soon will a dark day sever  
    The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's foam.

A dream, and more than a dream, and dimmer  
    At once and brighter than dreams that flee,  
The moment's joy of the seaward swimmer  
    Abides, remembered as truth may be.  
Not all the joy and not all the glory  
    Must fade as leaves when the woods wax hoary;  
For there the downs and the sea-banks glimmer,  
    And here to south of them swells the sea.

### III.

*Swinburne, Atalanta.*



## A SUNSET.

*November 25, 1885.*

TO VICTOR HUGO.

### I.

It was the dawn of winter: sword in sheath,  
Change, veiled and mild, came down the gradual air  
With cold slow smiles that hid the doom beneath.  
Five days to die in yet were autumn's, ere  
The last leaf withered from his flowerless wreath.  
South, east, and north, our skies were all blown  
bare,  
But westward over glimmering holt and heath  
Cloud, wind, and light had made a heaven more fair  
Than ever dream or truth  
Showed earth in time's keen youth  
When men with angels communed unaware.  
Above the sun's head, now  
Veiled even to the ardent brow,  
Rose two sheer wings of sundering cloud, that were  
As a bird's poised for vehement flight,  
Full-fledged with plumes of tawny fire and hoar grey  
light.

## II.

As midnight black, as twilight brown, they spread,  
But feathered thick with flame that streaked and  
lined  
Their living darkness, ominous else of dread,  
From south to northmost verge of heaven inclined  
Most like some giant angel's, whose bent head  
Bowed earthward, as with message for mankind  
Of doom or benediction to be shed  
From passage of his presence. Far behind,  
Even while they seemed to close,  
Stoop, and take flight, arose  
Above them, higher than heavenliest thought may find  
In light or night supreme  
Of vision or of dream,  
Immeasurable of men's eyes or mounting mind,  
Heaven, manifest in manifold  
Light of pure pallid amber, cheered with fire of gold.

## III.

And where the fine gold faded all the sky  
Shone green as the outer sea when April glows,  
Inlaid with flakes and feathers fledged to fly  
Of cloud suspense in rapture and repose,  
With large live petals, broad as love bids lie  
Full open when the sun salutes the rose,

And small rent sprays wherewith the heavens most high  
Were strewn as autumn strews the garden-close  
With ruinous roseleaves whirled  
About their wan chill world,  
Through wind-worn bowers that now no music knows,  
Spoil of the dim dusk year  
Whose utter night is near,  
And near the flower of dawn beyond it blows;  
Till east and west were fire and light,  
As though the dawn to come had flushed the coming night.

## IV.

The highways paced of men that toil or play,  
The byways known of none but lonely feet,  
Were paven of purple woven of night and day  
With hands that met as hands of friends might meet—  
As though night's were not lifted up to slay  
And day's had waxed not weaker. Peace more sweet  
Than music, light more soft than shadow, lay  
On downs and moorlands wan with day's defeat,  
That watched afar above  
Life's very rose of love  
Let all its lustrous leaves fall, fade, and fleet,  
And fill all heaven and earth  
Full as with fires of birth

Whence time should feed his years with light and heat:  
Nay, not life's, but a flower more strong  
Than life or time or death, love's very rose of song.

## v.

Song visible, whence all men's eyes were lit  
With love and loving wonder: song that glowed  
Through cloud and change on souls that knew not it  
And hearts that wist not whence their comfort  
flowed,  
Whence fear was lightened of her fever-fit,  
Whence anguish of her life-compelling load.  
Yea, no man's head whereon the fire alit,  
Of all that passed along that sunset road  
Westward, no brow so drear,  
No eye so dull of cheer,  
No face so mean whereon that light abode,  
But as with alien pride  
Strange godhead glorified  
Each feature flushed from heaven with fire that showed  
The likeness of its own life wrought  
By strong transfiguration as of living thought.

## VI.

Nor only clouds of the everlasting sky,  
Nor only men that paced that sunward way

To the utter bourne of evening, passed not by  
 Unblest or unillumined: none might say,  
 Of all things visible in the wide world's eye,  
 That all too low for all that grace it lay:  
 The lowliest lakelets of the moorland nigh,  
 The narrowest pools where shallowest wavelets play,  
 Were filled from heaven above  
 With light like fire of love,  
 With flames and colours like a dawn in May,  
 As hearts that lowlier live  
 With light of thoughts that give  
 Light from the depth of souls more deep than  
 they  
 Through song's or story's kindling scroll,  
 The splendour of the shadow that reveals the soul.

## VII.

For, when such light is in the world, we share,  
 All of us, all the rays thereof that shine:  
 Its presence is alive in the unseen air,  
 Its fire within our veins as quickening wine;  
 A spirit is shed on all men everywhere,  
 Known or not known of all men for divine.  
 Yea, as the sun makes heaven, that light makes fair  
 All souls of ours, all lesser souls than thine,  
 Priest, prophet, seer and sage,  
 Lord of a subject age

That bears thy seal upon it for a sign;  
 Whose name shall be thy name,  
 Whose light thy light of fame,  
 The light of love that makes thy soul a shrine;  
 Whose record through all years to be  
 Shall bear this witness written—that its womb bare thee.

## VIII.

Oh mystery, whence to one man's hand was given  
 Power upon all things of the spirit, and might  
 Whereby the veil of all the years was riven  
 And naked stood the secret soul of night!  
 Oh marvel, hailed of eyes whence cloud is driven,  
 That shows at last wrong reconciled with right  
 By death divine of evil and sin forgiven!  
 Oh light of song, whose fire is perfect light!  
 No speech, no voice, no thought,  
 No love, avails us aught  
 For service of thanksgiving in his sight  
 Who hath given us all for ever  
 Such gifts that man gave never  
 So many and great since first Time's wings took flight.  
 Man may not praise a spirit above  
 Man's: life and death shall praise him: we can only love.

## IX.

Life, everlasting while the worlds endure,  
 Death, self-abased before a power more high,

Shall bear one witness, and their word stand sure,  
That not till time be dead shall this man die.  
Love, like a bird, comes loyal to his lure;  
Fame flies before him, wingless else to fly.  
A child's heart toward his kind is not more pure,  
An eagle's toward the sun no lordlier eye.  
Awe sweet as love and proud  
As fame, though hushed and bowed,  
Yearns toward him silent as his face goes by:  
All crowns before his crown  
Triumphantly bow down,  
For pride that one more great than all draws nigh:  
All souls applaud, all hearts acclaim,  
One heart benign, one soul supreme, one conquering name.

## ADIEUX À MARIE STUART.

Epilogue to the Trilogy of Mary Stuart.

## I.

QUEEN, for whose house my fathers fought  
With hopes that rose and fell,  
Red star of boyhood's fiery thought,  
Farewell.

They gave their lives, and I, my queen,  
Have given you of my life,  
Seeing your brave star burn high between  
Men's strife.

The strife that lightened round their spears  
Long since fell still: so long  
Hardly may hope to last in years  
My song.

But still through strife of time and thought  
Your light on me too fell:  
Queen, in whose name we sang or fought,  
Farewell.

## II.

There beats no heart on either border  
Wherethrough the north blasts blow  
But keeps your memory as a warder  
His beacon-fire aglow.

Long since it fired with love and wonder  
Mine, for whose April age  
Blithe midsummer made banquet under  
The shade of Hermitage.

Soft sang the burn's blithe notes, that gather  
Strength to ring true:  
And air and trees and sun and heather  
Remembered you.

Old border ghosts of fight or fairy  
Or love or teen,  
These they forgot, remembering Mary  
The Queen.

## III.

Queen once of Scots and ever of ours  
Whose sires brought forth for you  
Their lives to strew your way like flowers,  
Adieu.

Dead is full many a dead man's name  
Who died for you this long  
Time past: shall this too fare the same,  
My song?

But surely, though it die or live,  
Your face was worth  
All that a man may think to give  
On earth.

No darkness cast of years between  
Can darken you;  
Man's love will never bid my queen  
Adieu.

## IV.

Love hangs like light about your name  
As music round the shell:  
No heart can take of you a tame  
Farewell.

Yet, when your very face was seen,  
Ill gifts were yours for giving:  
Love gat strange guerdons of my queen  
When living.

Oh diamond heart unflawed and clear,  
The whole world's crowning jewel!  
Was ever heart so deadly dear  
So cruel?

Yet none for you of all that bled  
Grudged once one drop that fell:  
Not one to life reluctant said  
Farewell.

## v.

Strange love they have given you, love disloyal,  
Who mock with praise your name,  
To leave a head so rare and royal  
Too low for praise or blame.

You could not love nor hate, they tell us,  
You had nor sense nor sting:  
In God's name, then, what plague befell us  
To fight for such a thing?

"Some faults the gods will give," to fetter  
Man's highest intent:  
But surely you were something better  
Than innocent!

No maid that strays with steps unwary  
Through snares unseen,  
But one to live and die for; Mary,  
The Queen.

## VI.

Forgive them all their praise, who blot  
Your fame with praise of you:  
Then love may say, and falter not,  
Adieu.

Yet some you hardly would forgive  
Who did you much less wrong  
Once: but resentment should not live  
Too long.

They never saw your lip's bright bow,  
Your swordbright eyes,  
The bluest of heavenly things below  
The skies.

Clear eyes that love's self finds most like  
A swordblade's blue,  
A swordblade's ever keen to strike,  
Adieu.

## VII.

Though all things breathe or sound of fight  
That yet make up your spell,  
To bid you were to bid the light  
Farewell.

Farewell the song says only, being  
A star whose race is run:  
Farewell the soul says never, seeing  
The sun.

Yet, wellnigh as with flash of tears,  
The song must say but so  
That took your praise up twenty years  
Ago.

More bright than stars or moons that vary,  
Sun kindling heaven and hell,  
Here, after all these years, Queen Mary,  
Farewell.

## A BIRTH-SONG.

(For Olivia Frances Madox Rossetti, born Sept. 20, 1875.)

OUT of the dark sweet sleep  
Where no dreams laugh or weep  
    Borne through bright gates of birth  
Into the dim sweet light  
    Where day still dreams of night  
    While heaven takes form on earth.  
White rose of spirit and flesh, red lily of love,  
    What note of song have we  
    Fit for the birds and thee,  
Fair nestling couched beneath the mother-dove?

Nay, in some more divine  
Small speechless song of thine  
    Some news too good for words,  
Heart-hushed and smiling, we  
    Might hope to have of thee.  
    The youngest of God's birds,  
If thy sweet sense might mix itself with ours,  
    If ours might understand  
    The language of thy land,  
Ere thine become the tongue of mortal hours:

Ere thy lips learn too soon  
 Their soft first human tune,  
 Sweet, but less sweet than now,  
 And thy raised eyes to read  
 Glad and good things indeed,  
 But none so sweet as thou:  
 Ere thought lift up their flower-soft lids to see  
 What life and love on earth  
 Bring thee for gifts at birth,  
 But none so good as thine who hast given us thee:

Now, ere thy sense forget  
 The heaven that fills it yet,  
 Now, sleeping or awake,  
 If thou couldst tell, or we  
 Ask and be heard of thee,  
 For love's undying sake,  
 From thy dumb lips divine and bright mute speech  
 Such news might touch our ear  
 That then would burn to hear  
 Too high a message now for man's to reach.

Ere the gold hair of corn  
 Had withered wast thou born,  
 To make the good time glad;  
 The time that but last year  
 Fell colder than a tear  
 On hearts and hopes turned sad.  
 High hopes and hearts requickening in thy dawn,  
 Even theirs whose life-springs, child,  
 Filled thine with life and smiled,  
 But then wept blood for half their own withdrawn.\*

\* Oliver Madox Brown died Nov. 5, 1874, in his twentieth year  
*Swinburne, Atalanta.* 16

If death and birth be one,  
And set with rise of sun,  
And truth with dreams divine,  
Some word might come with thee  
From over the still sea  
Deep hid in shade or shine,  
Crossed by the crossing sails of death and birth,  
Word of some sweet new thing  
Fit for such lips to bring,  
Some word of love, some afterthought of earth.

If love be strong as death,  
By what so natural breath  
As thine could this be said?  
By what so lovely way  
Could love send word to say  
He lives and is not dead?  
Such word alone were fit for only thee,  
If his and thine have met  
Where spirits rise and set,  
His whom we see not, thine whom scarce we see:

His there new-born, as thou  
New-born among us now;  
His, here so fruitful-souled,  
Now veiled and silent here,  
Now dumb as thou last year,  
A ghost of one year old:  
If lights that change their sphere in changing meet,  
Some ray might his not give  
To thine who wast to live,  
And make thy present with his past life sweet?

Let dreams that laugh or weep,  
All glad and sad dreams, sleep;

Truth more than dreams is dear.

Let thoughts that change and fly,  
Sweet thoughts and swift, go by;

More than all thought is here.

More than all hope can forge or memory feign

The life that in our eyes,

Made out of love's life, lies,

And flower-like fed with love for sun and rain.

Twice royal in his root

The sweet small olive-shoot

Here set in sacred earth;

Twice dowered with glorious grace

From either heaven-born race

First blended in its birth;

Fair god or genius of so fair an hour,

For love of either name

Twice crowned, with love and fame,

Guard and be gracious to the fair-named flower.

*Oct. 19, 1875.*

## HERSE.

WHEN grace is given us ever to behold  
    A child some sweet months old,  
Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,  
    Smiling, with bated breath,  
Hush! for the holiest thing that lives is here,  
    And heaven's own heart how near!  
How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,  
    Gaze on this verier one?  
Heart, hold thy peace: eyes, be cast down for shame;  
    Lips, breathe not yet its name.  
In heaven they know what name to call it; we,  
    How should we know? For, see!  
The adorable sweet living marvellous  
    Strange light that lightens us  
Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,  
    Full in a babe's warm face!  
All roses that the morning rears are nought,  
    All stars not worth a thought,  
Set this one star against them, or suppose  
    As rival this one rose.  
What price could pay with earth's whole weight of gold  
    One least flushed roseleaf's fold  
Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine  
    From each warm curve and line

Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillum  
The dappled rose-red bloom  
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet  
Clenched hands and curled-up feet,  
That on the roses of the dawn have trod  
As they came down from God,  
And keep the flush and colour that the sky  
Takes when the sun comes nigh,  
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace  
Evoked on God's own face  
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,  
He saw that it was good?  
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,  
And mere men's love too vile  
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims  
Read o'er the little limbs,  
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,  
Rejoice, revere, adore,  
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,  
Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.  
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,  
Even to draw nigh its head,  
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise  
Its mild miraculous eyes  
Out of their viewless vision—Oh, what then,  
What may be said of men?  
What speech may name a new-born child? what word  
Earth ever spake or heard?  
The best men's tongue that ever glory knew  
Called that a drop of dew  
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb  
Came forth in blameless bloom.

We have no word, as had those men most high,  
To call a baby by.  
Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—  
A better word than these,  
A better sign it was than flower or gem  
That love revealed to them:  
They knew that whence comes light or quickening flame,  
Thence only this thing came,  
And only might be likened of our love  
To somewhat born above,  
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,  
Only to dew's own birth.  
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,  
Babe, when we gaze on you,  
A dew-drop out of heaven whose colours are  
More bright than sun or star,  
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,  
Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,  
And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.  
Oh child, what news from heaven?

## A BABY'S EPITAPH.

April made me: winter laid me here away asleep.  
Bright as Maytime was my daytime; night is soft and deep:  
Though the morrow bring forth sorrow, well are ye that  
weep.

Ye that held me dear beheld me not a twelvemonth long:  
All the while ye saw me smile, ye knew not whence the song  
Came that made me smile, and laid me here, and wrought  
you wrong.

Angels, calling from your brawling world one undefiled,  
Homeward bade me, and forbade me here to rest beguiled:  
Here I sleep not: pass, and weep not here upon your  
child.

## THE BRIDE'S TRAGEDY.

“The wind wears roun’, the day wears doun,  
The moon is grisly grey;  
There’s nae man rides by the mirk muirsides,  
Nor down the dark Tyne’s way.”  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

“And winna ye watch the night wi’ me,  
And winna ye wake the morn?  
Foul shame it were that your ae mither  
Should brook her ae son’s scorn.”  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

“Oh mither, I may not sleep nor stay,  
My weird is ill to dree;  
For a fause faint lord of the south seaboard  
Wad win my bride of me.”  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

“The winds are strang, and the nights are lang,  
And the ways are sair to ride:  
And I maun gang to wreak my wrang,  
And ye maun bide and bide.”  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"Gin I maun bide and bide, Willie,  
I wot my weird is sair:  
Weel may ye get ye a light love yet,  
But never a mither mair."  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"Oh gin the morrow be great wi' sorrow,  
The wyte be yours of a':  
But though ye slay me that haud and stay me,  
The weird ye will maun fa'."  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

When cocks were crawling and day was dawning,  
He's boun' him forth to ride:  
And the ae first that he's met that day  
Was fause Earl Robert's bride."  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

Oh blithe and braw were the bride-folk a',  
But sad and saft rade she;  
And sad as doom was her fause bridegroom,  
But fair and fain was he."  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"And winna ye bide, sae saft ye ride,  
And winna ye speak wi' me?  
For mony's the word and the kindly word  
I have spoken aft wi' thee."  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

“My lamp was lit yestreen, Willie,  
My window-gate was wide:  
But ye camena nigh me till day came by me  
And made me not your bride.”  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

He’s set his hand to her bridle-rein,  
He’s turned her horse away:  
And the cry was sair, and the wrath was mair,  
And fast and fain rode they.  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

But when they came to Chollerford,  
I wot the ways were fell;  
For broad and brown the spate swang down,  
And the lift was mirk as hell.  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

“And will ye ride yon fell water,  
Or will ye bide for fear?  
Nae scathe ye’ll win o’ your father’s kin,  
Though they should slay me here!”  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

“I had liefer ride yon fell water,  
Though strange it be to ride,  
Than I wad stand on the fair green strand  
And thou be slain beside.”  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"I had liefer swim yon wild water,  
Though sair it be to bide,  
Than I wad stand at a strange man's hand,  
To be a strange man's bride."  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"I had liefer drink yon dark water  
Wi' the stanes to make my bed,  
And the faem to hide me, and thou beside me,  
Than I wad see thee dead."  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

He's kissed her twice, he's kissed her thrice,  
On cheek and lip and chin:  
He's wound her rein to his hand again,  
And lightly they leapt in.  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

Their hearts were high to live or die,  
Their steeds were stark of limb:  
But the stream was starker, the spate was darker,  
Than man might live and swim.  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

The first ae step they strode therein,  
It smote them foot and knee:  
But ere they wan to the mid water  
The spate was as the sea.  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

But when they wan to the mid water,  
It smote them hand and head:  
And nae man knows but the wave that flows  
Where they lie drowned and dead.  
In, in, out and in,  
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

## HAD I WIST.

"Sing me the song that ripples round and round."

HAD I wist, quoth spring to the swallow,  
That earth could forget me, kissed  
By summer, and lured to follow  
Down ways that I know not, I,  
My heart should have waxed not high:  
Mid-March would have seen me die,  
Had I wist.

Had I wist, Oh spring, said the swallow,  
That hope was a sunlit mist  
And the faint light heart of it hollow,  
Thy woods had not heard me sing,  
Thy winds had not known my wing;  
It had faltered ere thine did, spring,  
Had I wist.

## WHAT THE BIRDS SING.

(From LOCRINE: A TRAGEDY.)

## ESTRILD.

Dost thou understand,  
Child, what the birds are singing?

## SABRINA.

All the land

Knows that: the water tells it to the rushes  
Aloud, and lower and softlier to the sand:  
The flower-fays, lip to lip and hand to hand,  
Laugh and repeat it all till darkness hushes  
Their singing with a word that falls and crushes  
All song to silence down the river-strand  
And where the hawthorns hearken for the thrushes  
And all the secret sense is sweet and wise  
That sings through all their singing, and replies  
When we would know if heaven be gay or grey  
And would not open all too soon our eyes  
To look perchance on no such happy skies  
As sleep brings close and waking blows away.

## A REMINISCENCE.

THE rose to the wind has yielded: all its leaves  
Lie strewn on the graveyard grass, and all their light  
And colour and fragrance leave our sense and sight  
Bereft as a man whom bitter time bereaves  
Of blossom at once and hope of garnered sheaves,  
Of April at once and August. Day to night  
Calls wailing, and life to death, and depth to height,  
And soul upon soul of man that hears and grieves.

Who knows, though he see the snow-cold blossom shed,  
If haply the heart that burned within the rose,  
The spirit in sense, the life of life be dead?  
If haply the wind that slays the storming snows  
Be one with the wind that quickens? Bow thine head,  
Oh Sorrow, and commune with thine heart: who knows?

## LIFE IN DEATH.

He should have followed who goes forth before us,  
Last born of us in life, in death first-born:  
The last to lift up eyes against the morn,  
The first to see the sunset. Life, that bore us  
Perchance for death to comfort and restore us,  
Of him hath left us here awhile forlorn,  
For him is as a garment overworn,  
And time and change, with suns and stars in chorus,  
Silent. But if, beyond all change or time,  
A law more just, more equal, more sublime  
Than sways the surge of life's loud sterile sea  
Sways that still world whose peace environs him,  
Where death lies dead as night when stars wax dim,  
Above all thought or hope of ours is he.

*August 2, 1891.*

## JOHN FORD.

Hew hard the marble from the mountain's heart  
Where hardest night holds fast in iron gloom  
Gems brighter than an April dawn in bloom,  
That his Memnonian likeness thence may start  
Revealed, whose hand with high funereal art  
Carved night, and chiselled shadow: be the tomb  
That speaks him famous graven with signs of doom  
Intrenched inevitably in lines athwart,  
As on some thunder-blasted Titan's brow  
His record of rebellion. Not the day  
Shall strike forth music from so stern a chord,  
Touching this marble: darkness, none knows how,  
And stars impenetrable of midnight, may.  
So looms the likeness of thy soul, John Ford.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Not if men's tongues and angels' all in one  
Spake, might the word be said that might speak Thee.  
Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains, yea,  
the sea,  
What power is in them all to praise the sun?  
His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.  
Man, woman, child, praise God for him; but he  
Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.  
He is; and, being, beholds his work well done.  
All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,  
Are his: without him, day were night on earth.  
Time knows not his from time's own period.  
All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,  
Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.  
All stars are angels; but the sun is God.

### EPILOGUE TO THE SONNET SEQUENCE ON THE GREAT DEAD.

OUR mother, which wast twice, as history saith,  
Found first among the nations: once, when she  
Who bore thine ensign saw the God in thee  
Smite Spain, and bring forth Shakespeare: once, when death  
Shrank, and Rome's bloodhounds cowered, at Milton's  
breath:  
More than thy place, then first among the free,  
More than that sovereign lordship of the sea  
Bequeathed to Cromwell from Elizabeth  
More than thy fiery guiding-star, which Drake  
Hailed, and the deep saw lit again for Blake,  
More than all deeds wrought of thy strong right hand,  
This praise keeps most thy fame's memorial strong,  
That thou wast head of all these streams of song,  
And time bows down to thee as Shakespeare's land,

## ENGLAND: AN ODE.

## I.

SEA and strand, and a lordlier land than sea-tides rolling  
and rising sun  
Clasp and lighten in climes that brighten with day when  
day that was here is done,  
Call aloud on their children, proud with trust that future  
and past are one.

Far and near from the swan's nest here the storm-birds  
bred of her fair white breast,  
Sons whose home was the sea-wave's foam, have borne  
the fame of her east and west;  
North and south has the storm-wind's mouth rung praise  
of England and England's quest.

Fame, wherever her flag flew, never forbore to fly with an  
equal wing:  
France and Spain with their warrior train bowed down  
before her as thrall to king;  
India knelt at her feet, and felt her sway more fruitful of  
life than spring.

Darkness round them as iron bound fell off from races of  
elder name,  
Slain at sight of her eyes, whose light bids freedom lighten  
and burn as flame;  
Night endures not the touch that cures of kingship tyrants,  
and slaves of shame.

All the terror of time, where error and fear were lords of  
a world of slaves,  
Age on age in resurgent rage and anguish darkening as  
waves on waves,  
Fell or fled from a face that shed such grace as quickens  
the dust of graves.

Things of night at her glance took flight: the strengths of  
darkness recoiled and sank:  
Sank the fires of the murderous pyres whereon wild agony  
writhed and shrank:  
Rose the light of the reign of right from gulfs of years  
that the darkness drank.

Yet the might of her wings in flight, whence glory lightens  
and music rings,  
Loud and bright as the dawn's, shall smite and still the  
discord of evil things,  
Yet not slain by her radiant reign, but darkened now by  
her sail-stretched wings.

## II.

Music made of change and conquest, glory born of evil  
slain,  
Stilled the discord, slew the darkness, bade the lights of  
tempest wane,  
Where the deathless dawn of England rose in sign that  
right should reign.

Mercy, where the tiger wallowed mad and blind with blood  
and lust,  
Justice, where the jackal yelped and fed, and slaves allowed  
it just,  
Rose as England's light on Asia rose, and smote them  
down to dust.

Justice bright as mercy, mercy girt by justice with her  
sword,  
Smote and saved and raised und ruined, till the tyrant-  
ridden horde  
Saw the lightning fade from heaven and knew the sun for  
God and lord.

Where the footfall sounds of England, where the smile of  
England shines,  
Rings the tread and laughs the face of freedom, fair as  
hope divines  
Days to be, more brave than ours and lit by lordlier stars  
for signs.

All our past acclaims our future: Shakespeare's voice and  
Nelson's hand,  
Milton's faith and Wordsworth's trust in this our chosen  
and chainless land,  
Bear us witness: come the world against her, England yet  
shall stand.

Earth and sea bear England witness if he lied who said  
it; he  
Whom the winds that ward her, waves that clasp, and  
herb and flower and tree  
Fed with English dews and sunbeams, hail as more than  
man may be.

No man ever spake as he that bade our England be but  
true,  
Keep but faith with England fast and firm, and none  
should bid her rue;  
None may speak as he: but all may know the sign that  
Shakespeare knew.

## III.

From the springs of the dawn, from the depths of the  
noon, from the heights of the night that shine,  
Hope, faith, and remembrance of glory that found but in  
England her throne and her shrine,  
Speak louder than song may proclaim them, that here is  
the seal of them set for a sign.

And loud as the sea's voice thunders applause of the land  
that is one with the sea  
Speaks Time in the ear of the people that never at heart  
was not inly free  
The word of command that assures us of life, if we will  
but that life shall be;

If the race that is first of the races of men who behold  
unashamed the sun  
Stand fast and forget not the sign that is given of the  
years and the wars that are done,  
The token that all who are born of its blood should in  
heart as in blood be one.

The word of remembrance that lightens as fire from the  
steeps of the storm-lit past  
Bids only the faith of our fathers endure in us, firm as  
they held it fast:  
That the glory which was from the first upon England  
alone may endure to the last.

That the love and the hate may change not, the faith may  
not fade, nor the wrath nor scorn,  
That shines for her sons and that burns for her foemen  
as fire of the night or the morn:  
That the births of her womb may forget not the sign of  
the glory wherein they were born.

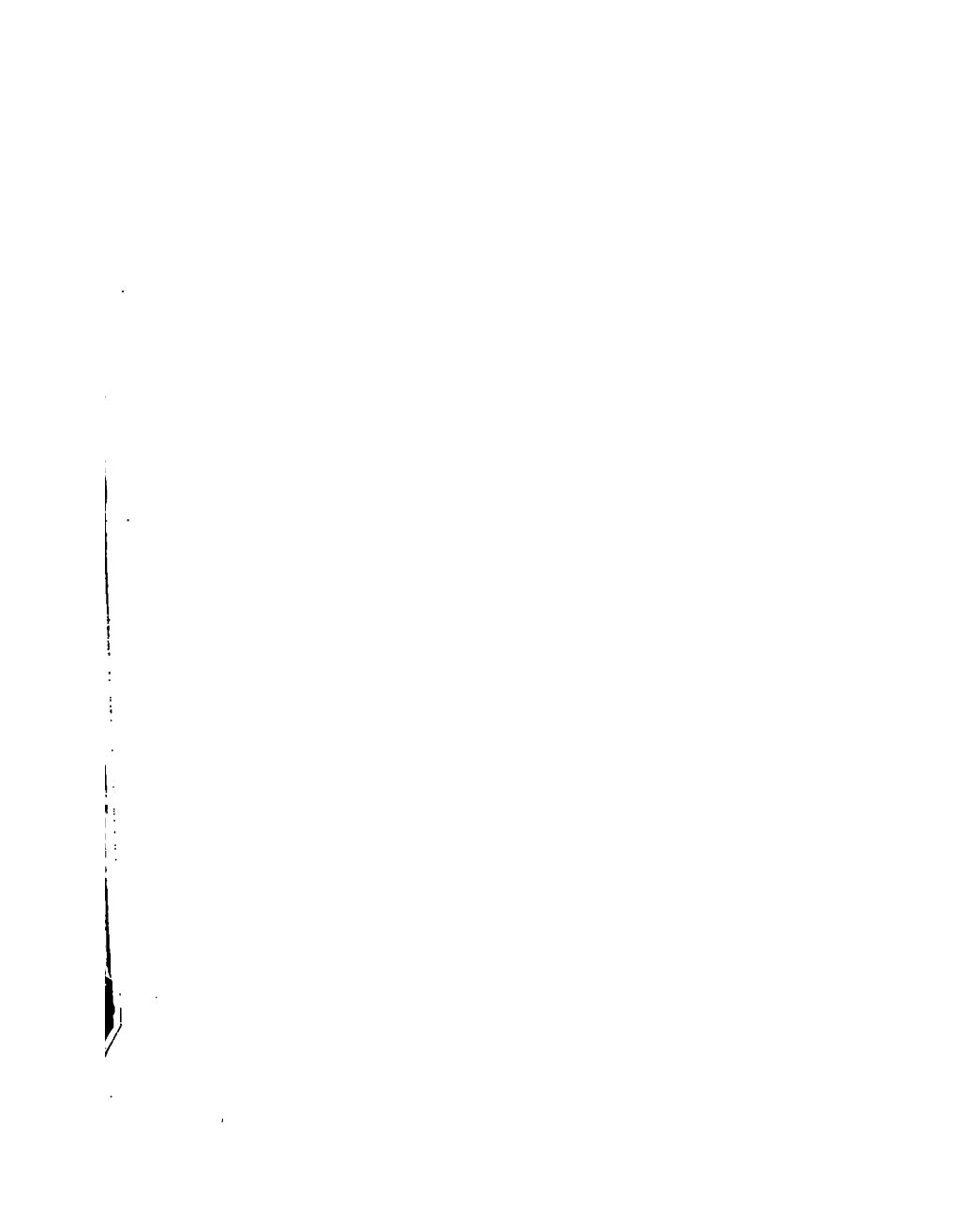
A light that is more than the sunlight, an air that is  
brighter than morning's breath,

Clothes England about as the strong sea clasps her, and  
answers the word that it saith;  
The word that assures her of life if she change not, and  
choose not the ways of death.

Change darkens and lightens around her, alternate in hope  
and in fear to be:  
Hope knows not if fear speak truth, nor fear whether hope  
be not blind as she:  
But the sun is in heaven that beholds her immortal, and  
girdled with life by the sea.



IV.



### A NYMPHOLEPT.

SUMMER, and noon, and a splendour of silence, felt,  
    Seen, and heard of the spirit within the sense.  
Soft through the frondage the shades of the sunbeams  
    melt,  
Sharp through the foliage the shafts of them, keen and  
    dense,  
Cleave, as discharged from the string of the God's  
    bow, tense  
As a war-steed's girth, and bright as a warrior's belt.  
    Ah, why should an hour that is heaven for an hour  
    pass hence?

I dare not sleep for delight of the perfect hour,  
    Lest God be wroth that his gift should be scorned of  
    man.  
The face of the warm bright world is the face of a flower,  
    The word of the wind and the leaves that the light  
    winds fan  
As the word that quickened at first into flame, and ran,  
    Creative and subtle and fierce with invasive power,  
    Through darkness and cloud, from the breath of the  
    one God, Pan.

The perfume of earth possessed by the sun pervades  
The chaster air that he soothes but with sense of  
sleep.  
Soft, imminent, strong as desire that prevails and fades,  
The passing noon that beholds not a cloudlet weep  
Imbues and impregnates life with delight more deep  
Than dawn or sunset or moonrise on lawns or glades  
Can shed from the skies that receive it and may not  
keep.

The skies may hold not the splendour of sundown fast;  
It wanes into twilight as dawn dies down into day.  
And the moon, triumphant when twilight is overpast,  
Takes pride but awhile in the hours of her stately  
sway.  
But the might of the noon, though the light of it pass  
away,  
Leaves earth fulfilled of desires and of dreams that last;  
But if any there be that hath sense of them none can  
say

For if any there be that hath sight of them, sense, or trust  
Made strong by the might of a vision, the strength of a  
dream,  
His lips shall straiten and close as a dead man's must,  
His heart shall be sealed as the voice of a frost-bound  
stream.  
For the deep mid mystery of light and of heat that  
seem  
To clasp and pierce dark earth, and enkindle dust,  
Shall a man's faith say what it is? or a man's guess  
deem?

Sleep lies not heavier on eyes that have watched all  
night

Than hangs the heat of the noon on the hills and  
trees.

Why now should the haze not open, and yield to sight  
A fairer secret than hope or than slumber sees?

I seek not heaven with submission of lips and knees,  
With worship and prayer for a sign till it leap to light:  
I gaze on the gods about me, and call on these.

I call on the gods hard by, the divine dim powers  
Whose likeness is here at hand, in the breathless air,  
In the pulseless peace of the fervid and silent flowers,  
In the faint sweet speech of the waters that whisper  
there.

Ah, what should darkness do in a world so fair?  
The bent-grass heaves not, the couch-grass quails not or  
cowers;  
The wind's kiss frets not the rowan's or aspen's hair.

But the silence trembles with passion of sound sup-  
pressed,  
And the twilight quivers and yearns to the sunward,  
wrung

With love as with pain; and the wide wood's motionless  
breast  
Is thrilled with a dumb desire that would fain find  
tongue

And palpitates, tongueless as she whom a man-snake  
stung,  
Whose heart now heaves in the nightingale, never at rest  
Nor satiated ever with song till her last be sung.

Is it rapture or terror that circles me round, and invades  
Each vein of my life with hope—if it be not fear?  
Each pulse that awakens my blood into rapture fades,  
Each pulse that subsides into dread of a strange thing  
near  
Requicken with sense of a terror less dread than  
dear.  
Is peace not one with light in the deep green glades  
Where summer at noonday slumbers? Is peace not here?

The tall thin stems of the firs, and the roof sublime  
That screens from the sun the floor of the steep still  
wood,  
Deep, silent, splendid, and perfect and calm as time,  
Stand fast as ever in sight of the night they stood,  
When night gave all that moonlight and dewfall could.  
The dense ferns deepen, the moss glows warm as the  
thyme:  
The wild heath quivers about me: the world is good.

Is it Pan's breath, fierce in the tremulous maidenhair,  
That bids fear creep as a snake through the woodlands,  
felt  
In the leaves that it stirs not yet, in the mute bright air,  
In the stress of the sun? For here has the great God  
dwelt:  
For hence were the shafts of his love or his anger  
dealt.  
For here has his wrath been fierce as his love was fair,  
When each was as fire to the darkness its breath bade  
melt.

Is it love, is it dread, that enkindles the trembling noon,  
 That yearns, reluctant in rapture that fear has fed,  
 As man for woman, as woman for man? Full soon,  
 If I live, and the life that may look on him drop not dead,  
 Shall the ear that hears not a leaf quake hear his tread,  
 The sense that knows not the sound of the deep day's tune  
 Receive the God, be it love that he brings or dread.

The naked noon is upon me: the fierce dumb spell,  
 The fearful charm of the strong sun's imminent might,  
 Unmerciful, steadfast, deeper than seas that swell,  
 Pervades, invades, appals me with loveless light,  
 With harsher awe than breathes in the breath of night.  
 Have mercy, God who art all! For I know thee well,  
 How sharp is thine eye to lighten, thine hand to smite.

The whole wood feels thee, the whole air fears thee: but fear  
 So deep, so dim, so sacred, is wellnigh sweet.  
 For the light that hangs and broods on the woodlands here,  
 Intense, invasive, intolerant, imperious, and meet  
 To lighten the works of thine hands and the ways of thy feet,  
 Is hot with the fire of the breath of thy life, and dear  
 As hope that shrivels or shrinks not for frost or heat.

*Swinburne, Atalanta.*

Thee, thee the supreme dim godhead, approved afar,  
Perceived of the soul and conceived of the sense of  
man,  
We scarce dare love, and we dare not fear: the star  
We call the sun, that lit us when life began  
To brood on the world that is thine by his grace for a  
span,  
Conceals and reveals in the semblance of things that  
are  
Thine immanent presence, the pulse of thy heart's life,  
Pan.

The fierce mid noon that wakens and warms the  
snake  
Conceals thy mercy, reveals thy wrath: and again  
The dew-bright hour that assuages the twilight brake  
Conceals thy wrath and reveals thy mercy: then  
Thou art fearful only for evil souls of men  
That feel with nightfall the serpent within them *wake*,  
And hate the holy darkness on glade and glen.

Yea, then we know not and dream not if ill things be,  
Or if aught of the work of the wrong of the world be  
thine.  
We hear not the footfall of terror that treads the sea,  
We hear not the moan of winds that assail the pine:  
We see not if shipwreck reign in the storm's dim  
shrine;  
If death do service and doom bear witness to thee  
We see not,—know not if blood for thy lips be  
wine.

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But in all things evil and fearful that fear may scan,  
 As in all things good, as in all things fair that fall,  
 We know thee present and latent, the lord of man;  
 In the murmuring of doves, in the clamouring of winds  
 that call  
 And wolves that howl for their prey; in the midnight's  
 pall,  
 In the naked and nymph-like feet of the dawn, Oh Pan,  
 And in each life living, Oh thou the God who art all.

Smiling and singing, wailing and wringing of hands,  
 Laughing and weeping, watching and sleeping, still  
 Proclaim but and prove but thee, as the shifted sands  
 Speak forth and show but the strength of the sea's wild  
 will  
 That sifts and grinds them as grain in the storm-wind's  
 mill.  
 In thee is the doom that falls and the doom that stands:  
 The tempests utter thy word, and the stars fulfil.

Where Etna shudders with passion and pain volcanic  
 That rend her heart as with anguish that rends a  
 man's,  
 Where Typho labours, and finds not his thews Titanic,  
 In breathless torment that ever the flame's breath  
 fans,  
 Men felt and feared thee of old, whose pastoral clans  
 Were given to the charge of thy keeping; and soundless  
 panic  
 Held fast the woodland whose depths and whose heights  
 were Pan's.

And here, though fear be less than delight, and awe  
Be one with desire and with worship of earth and  
thee,  
So mild seems now thy secret and speechless law,  
So fair and fearless and faithful and godlike she,  
So soft the spell of thy whisper on stream and sea,  
Yet man should fear lest he see what of old men saw  
And withered: yet shall I quail if thy breath smite  
me.

Lord God of life and of light and of all things fair,  
Lord God of ravin and ruin and all things dim,  
Death seals up life, and darkness the sunbright air,  
And the stars that watch blind earth in the deep night  
swim  
Laugh, saying, "What God is your God, that ye call  
on him?  
What is man, that the God who is guide of our way  
should care  
If day for a man be golden, or night be grim?"

But thou, dost thou hear? Stars too but abide for a  
span,  
Gods too but endure for a season; but thou, if thou be  
God, more than shadows conceived and adored of man,  
Kind Gods and fierce, that bound him or made him  
free,  
The skies that scorn us are less in thy sight than we,  
Whose souls have strength to conceive and perceive thee,  
Pan,  
With sense more subtle than senses that hear and see.

Yet may not it say, though it seek thee and think to  
find

One soul of sense in the fire and the frost-bound clod,  
What heart is this, what spirit alive or blind,

That moves thee: only we know that the ways we  
trod

We tread, with hands unguided, with feet unshod,  
With eyes unlightened; and yet, if with steadfast mind,

Perchance may we find thee and know thee at last for  
God.

Yet then should God be dark as the dawn is bright,  
And bright as the night is dark on the world—no  
more.

Light slays not darkness, and darkness absorbs not  
light;

And the labour of evil and good from the years of  
yore

Is even as the labour of waves on a sunless shore.

And he who is first and last, who is depth and height,  
Keeps silence now, as the sun when the woods wax  
hoar.

The dark dumb godhead innate in the fair world's life  
Imbues the rapture of dawn and of noon with dread,  
Infects the peace of the star-shod night with strife,

Informs with terror the sorrow that guards the dead.

No service of bended knee or of humbled head

May soothe or subdue the God who has change to  
wife:

And life with death is as morning with evening wed.

And yet, if the light and the life in the light that here  
Seem soft and splendid and fervid as sleep may seem  
Be more than the shine of a smile or the flash of a tear,  
Sleep, change, and death are less than a spell-struck  
dream,

And fear than the fall of a leaf on a starlit stream.  
And yet, if the hope that hath said it absorb not fear,  
What helps it man that the stars and the waters gleam?

What helps it man, that the noon be indeed intense,  
The night be indeed worth worship? Fear and pain  
Were lords and masters yet of the secret sense,  
Which now dares deem not that light is as darkness,  
fain

Though dark dreams be to declare it, crying in vain.  
For whence, thou God of the light and the darkness,  
whence  
Dawns now this vision that bids not the sunbeams wane?

What light, what shadow, diviner than dawn or night,  
Draws near, makes pause, and again—or I dream—  
draws near?  
More soft than shadow, more strong than the strong sun's  
light,  
More pure than moonbeams—yea, but the rays run  
sheer  
As fire from the sun through the dusk of the pinewood,  
clear  
And constant; yea, but the shadow itself is bright  
That the light clothes round with love that is one with  
fear.

Above and behind it the noon and the woodland lie,  
Terrible, radiant with mystery, superb and subdued,  
Triumphant in silence; and hardly the sacred sky  
Seems free from the tyrannous weight of the dumb  
fierce mood  
Which rules as with fire and invasion of beams that  
brood  
The breathless rapture of earth till its hour pass by  
And leave her spirit released and her peace renewed.

I sleep not: never in sleep has a man beholding  
This. From the shadow that trembles and yearns with  
light  
Suppressed and elate and reluctant—obscure and golden  
As water kindled with presage of dawn or night—  
A form, a face, a wonder to sense and sight,  
Grows great as the moon through the month; and her  
eyes embolden  
Fear, till it change to desire, and desire to delight.

I sleep not: sleep would die of a dream so strange;  
A dream so sweet would die as a rainbow dies,  
As a sunbow laughs and is lost on the waves that  
range  
And reck not of light that flickers or spray that flies.  
But the sun withdraws not, the woodland shrinks not  
or sighs,  
No sweet thing sickens with sense or with fear of  
change;  
Light wounds not, darkness blinds not, my steadfast  
eyes.

Only the soul in my sense that receives the soul  
Whence now my spirit is kindled with breathless  
bliss  
Knows well if the light that wounds it with love makes  
whole,  
If hopes that carol be louder than fears that hiss,  
If truth be spoken of flowers and of waves that kiss,  
Of clouds and stars that contend for a sunbright goal.  
And yet may I dream that I dream not indeed of  
this?

An earth-born dreamer, constrained by the bonds of  
birth,  
Held fast by the flesh, compelled by his veins that  
beat  
And kindle to rapture or wrath, to desire or to mirth,  
May hear not surely the fall of immortal feet,  
May feel not surely if heaven upon earth be sweet;  
And here is my sense fulfilled of the joys of earth,  
Light, silence, bloom, shade, murmur of leaves that  
meet.

Bloom, fervour, and perfume of grasses and flowers  
aglow,  
Breathe and brighten about me: the darkness gleams,  
The sweet light shivers and laughs on the slopes below,  
Made soft by leaves that lighten and change like dreams;  
The silence thrills with the whisper of secret streams  
That well from the heart of the woodland: these I know:  
Earth bore them, heaven sustained them with showers  
and beams.

I lean my face to the heather, and drink the sun  
Whose flame-lit odour satiates the flowers: mine eyes  
Close, and the goal of delight and of life is one:  
No more I crave of earth or her kindred skies.  
No more? But the joy that springs from them smiles  
and flies:  
The sweet work wrought of them surely, the good work  
done,  
If the mind and the face of the season be loveless,  
dies.

Thee, therefore, thee would I come to, cleave to, cling,  
If haply thy heart be kind and thy gifts be good,  
Unknown sweet spirit, whose vesture is soft in spring,  
In summer splendid, in autumn pale as the wood  
That shudders and wanes and shrinks as a shamed  
thing should,  
In winter bright as the mail of a war-worn king  
Who stands where foes fled far from the face of him  
stood.

My spirit or thine is it, breath of thy life or of mine,  
Which fills my sense with a rapture that casts out  
fear?  
Pan's dim frown wanes, and his wild eyes brighten as  
thine,  
Transformed as night or as day by the kindling year.  
Earth-born, or mine eye were withered that sees, mine  
ear  
That hears were stricken to death by the sense divine,  
Earth-born I know thee: but heaven is about me here.

The terror that whispers in darkness and flames in light,  
The doubt that speaks in the silence of earth and sea,  
The sense, more fearful at noon than in midmost night,  
Of wrath scarce hushed and of imminent ill to be,  
Where are they? Heaven is as earth, and as heaven  
to me  
Earth: for the shadows that sundered them here take flight;  
And nought is all, as am I, but a dream of thee.

## A HAVEN.

EAST and north a waste of waters, south and west  
Lonelier lands than dreams in sleep would feign to be,  
When the soul goes forth on travel, and is prest  
Round and compassed in with clouds that flash and flee.  
Dells without a streamlet, downs without a tree,  
Cirques of hollow cliff that crumble, give their guest  
Little hope, till hard at hand he pause, to see  
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side nest.

Many a lone long mile, by many a headland's crest,  
Down by many a garden dear to bird and bee,  
Up by many a sea-down's bare and breezy breast,  
Winds the sandy strait of road where flowers run free.  
Here along the deep steep lanes by field and lea  
Knights have carolled, pilgrims chanted, on their quest,  
Haply, ere a roof rose toward the bleak strand's lee,  
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side nest.

Are the wild lands cursed perchance of time, or blest,  
Sad with fear or glad with comfort of the sea?  
Are the ruinous towers of churches fallen on rest  
Watched of wanderers woful now, glad once as we,

When the night has all men's eyes and hearts in fee,  
When the soul bows down dethroned and dispossess?  
Yet must peace keep guard, by day's and night's decree,  
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side nest.  
Friend, the lonely land is bright for you and me  
All its wild ways through: but this methinks is best,  
Here to watch how kindly time and change agree  
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side nest.

## THE MILL GARDEN.

STATELY stand the sunflowers, glowing down the garden-side,  
Ranged in royal rank arow along the warm grey wall,  
Whence their deep disks burn at rich midnoon afire with  
pride,  
Even as though their beams indeed were sunbeams, and  
the tall  
Sceptral stems bore stars whose reign endures, not flowers  
that fall.  
Lowlier laughs and basks the kindlier flower of homelier  
fame,  
Held by love the sweeter that it blooms in Shakespeare's  
name,  
Fragrant yet as though his hand had touched and made  
it thrill,  
Like the whole world's heart, with warm new life and  
gladdening flame.  
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the mill!  
  
Softlier here the flower-soft feet of refluent seasons  
glide,  
Lightlier breathes the long low note of change's gentler  
call.

Wind and storm and landslip feed the lone sea's gulf outside,  
Half a sewmew's first flight hence; but scarce may these appal  
Peace, whose perfect seal is set for signet here on all.  
Steep and deep and sterile, under fields no plough can tame,  
Dip the cliffs full-fledged with poppies red as love or shame,  
Wide wan daisies bleak and bold, or herbage harsh and chill;  
Here the full clove-pinks and wallflowers crown the love they claim.  
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the mill!

All the place breathes low, but not for fear lest ill betide,  
Soft as roses answering roses, or a dove's recall.  
Little heeds it how the seaward banks may stoop and slide,  
How the winds and years may hold all outer things in thrall,  
How their wrath may work on hoar church tower and boundary wall.  
Far and wide the waste and ravin of their rule proclaim  
Change alone the changeless lord of things, alone the same:  
Here a flower is stronger than the winds that work their will,  
Or the years that wing their way through darkness toward their aim.  
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the mill!

Friend, the home that smiled us welcome hither when we  
came,  
When we pass again with summer, surely should reclaim  
Somewhat given of heart's thanksgiving more than words  
fulfil—  
More than song, were song more sweet than all but love,  
might frame.  
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the mill!

## HEARTSEASE COUNTRY

TO ISABEL SWINBURNE

THE far green westward heavens are bland,  
The far green Wiltshire downs are clear  
As these deep meadows hard at hand:  
The sight knows hardly far from near,  
Nor morning joy from evening cheer.  
In cottage garden-plots their bees  
Find many a fervent flower to seize  
And strain and drain the heart away  
From ripe sweet-williams and sweet-peas  
At every turn on every way.

But gladliest seems one flower to expand  
Its whole sweet heart all round us here;  
'Tis Heartsease Country, Pansy Land.  
Nor sounds nor savours harsh and drear  
Where engines yell and halt and veer  
Can vex the sense of him who sees  
One flower-plot midway, that for trees  
Has poles, and sheds all grimed or grey  
For bowers like those that take the breeze  
At every turn on every way.

Content even there they smile and stand,  
Sweet thought's heart-easing flowers, nor fear,  
With reek and roaring steam though fanned,  
Nor shrink nor perish as they peer.  
The heart's eye holds not those more dear  
That glow between the lanes and leas  
Where'er the homeliest hand may please  
To bid them blossom as they may  
Where light approves and wind agrees  
At every turn on every way.

Sister, the word of winds and seas  
Endures not as the word of these  
Your wayside flowers whose breath would say  
How hearts that love may find heart's ease  
At every turn on every way.

## SONG.

Love laid his sleepless head  
On a thorny rosy bed;  
And his eyes with tears were red,  
And pale his lips as the dead.

And fear and sorrow and scorn  
Kept watch by his head forlorn,  
Till the night was overworn  
And the world was merry with morn.

And Joy came up with the day  
And kissed Love's lips as he lay,  
And the watchers ghostly and gray  
Sped from his pillow away.

And his eyes as the dawn grew bright,  
And his lips waxed ruddy as light:  
Sorrow may reign for a night,  
But day shall bring back delight.

## AN OLD SAYING.

MANY waters cannot quench love,  
Neither can the floods drown it.  
Who shall snare or slay the white dove  
Faith, whose very dreams crown it,  
Gird it round with grace and peace, deep,  
Warm, and pure, and soft as sweet sleep?  
Many waters cannot quench love,  
Neither can the floods drown it.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart,  
As a seal upon thine arm.  
How should we behold the days depart  
And the nights resign their charm?  
Love is as the soul: though hate and fear  
Waste and overthrow, they strike not here.  
Set me as a seal upon thine heart,  
As a seal upon thine arm.



AVE ATQUE VALE.



Nous devions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;  
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,  
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,  
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,  
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.

*Les Fleurs du Mal.*

## AVE ATQUE VALE.

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

### I.

SHALL I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,  
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?  
Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the séa,  
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,  
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,  
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?  
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,  
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat  
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet  
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore  
Trod by no tropic feet?

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## II.

For always thee the fervid languid glories  
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;  
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs  
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,  
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave  
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave  
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.  
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,  
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear  
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,  
Blind gods that cannot spare.

## III.

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,  
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:  
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,  
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other  
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;  
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,  
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;  
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep  
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;  
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,  
Seeing as men sow men reap.

## IV.

Oh sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping.  
That were athirst for sleep and no more life  
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!  
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping  
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,  
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,  
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang  
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?  
Is it not well where soul from body slips  
And flesh from bone divides without a pang  
As dew from flower-bell drips?

## V.

It is enough; the end and the beginning  
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.  
Oh hand unclasped of un beholden friend,  
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,  
No triumph and no labour and no lust,  
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.  
Oh quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,  
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night  
With obscure finger silences your sight,  
Nor in ~~your~~ <sup>your</sup> ~~soul~~ <sup>soul</sup> the sudden soul speaks thought,  
~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> light.

## VI.

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,  
    Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,  
    Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet  
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,  
    Such as thy vision here solicited,  
    Under the shadow of her fair vast head,  
The deep division of prodigious breasts,  
    The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,  
    The weight of awful tresses that still keep  
The savour and shade of old-world pine-forests  
    Where the wet hill-winds weep?

## VII.

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?  
    Oh gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,  
    Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?  
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,  
    What of life is there, what of ill or good?  
    Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood?  
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,  
    The faint fields quicken any terrene root,  
    In low lands where the sun and moon are mute  
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers  
    At all, or any fruit?

## VIII.

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,  
    Oh sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet  
    Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,  
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter  
    From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,  
    Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,  
Some little sound of unregarded tears  
    Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,  
    And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—  
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,  
    Sees only such things rise.

## IX.

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,  
    Far too far off for thought or any prayer.  
    What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?  
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?  
    Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,  
    Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,  
Our dreams pursue our dead, and do not find.  
    Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,  
    The low light fails us in elusive skies,  
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind  
    Are still the eluded eyes.

## X.

Not thee, oh never thee, in all time's changes,  
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,  
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll  
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges  
My spirit from communion of thy song—  
These memories and these melodies that throng  
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—  
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold  
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,  
Or through mine ears a mourning musical  
Of many mourners rolled.

## XL

I among these, I also, in such station  
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,  
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,  
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,  
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead  
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed  
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,  
And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,  
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,  
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb  
A curl of severed hair.

## XII.

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,  
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,  
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,  
Thou liest and on this dust no tears could quicken  
There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear  
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear  
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.  
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;  
But bending us-ward with memorial urns  
The most high Muses that fulfil all ages  
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

## XIII.

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often  
Among us darkling here the lord of light  
Makes manifest his music and his might  
In hearts that open and in lips that soften  
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.  
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,  
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;  
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,  
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame  
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed  
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

## XIV.

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sun-setting,  
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down  
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,  
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.  
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,  
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,  
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,  
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs  
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,  
And over thine irrevocable head  
Sheds light from the under skies.

## XV.

And one weeps with him in the ways Léthean,  
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill:  
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,  
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,  
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine  
Long since, and face no more called Erycine;  
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.  
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell  
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel  
Into the footless places once more trod,  
And shadows hot from hell.

## XVI.

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,  
No choral salutation lure to light  
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night  
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.  
There is no help for these things; none to mend,  
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,  
Will make death clear, or make life durable.  
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine  
And with wild notes about this dust of thine  
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell,  
And wreath an unseen shrine.

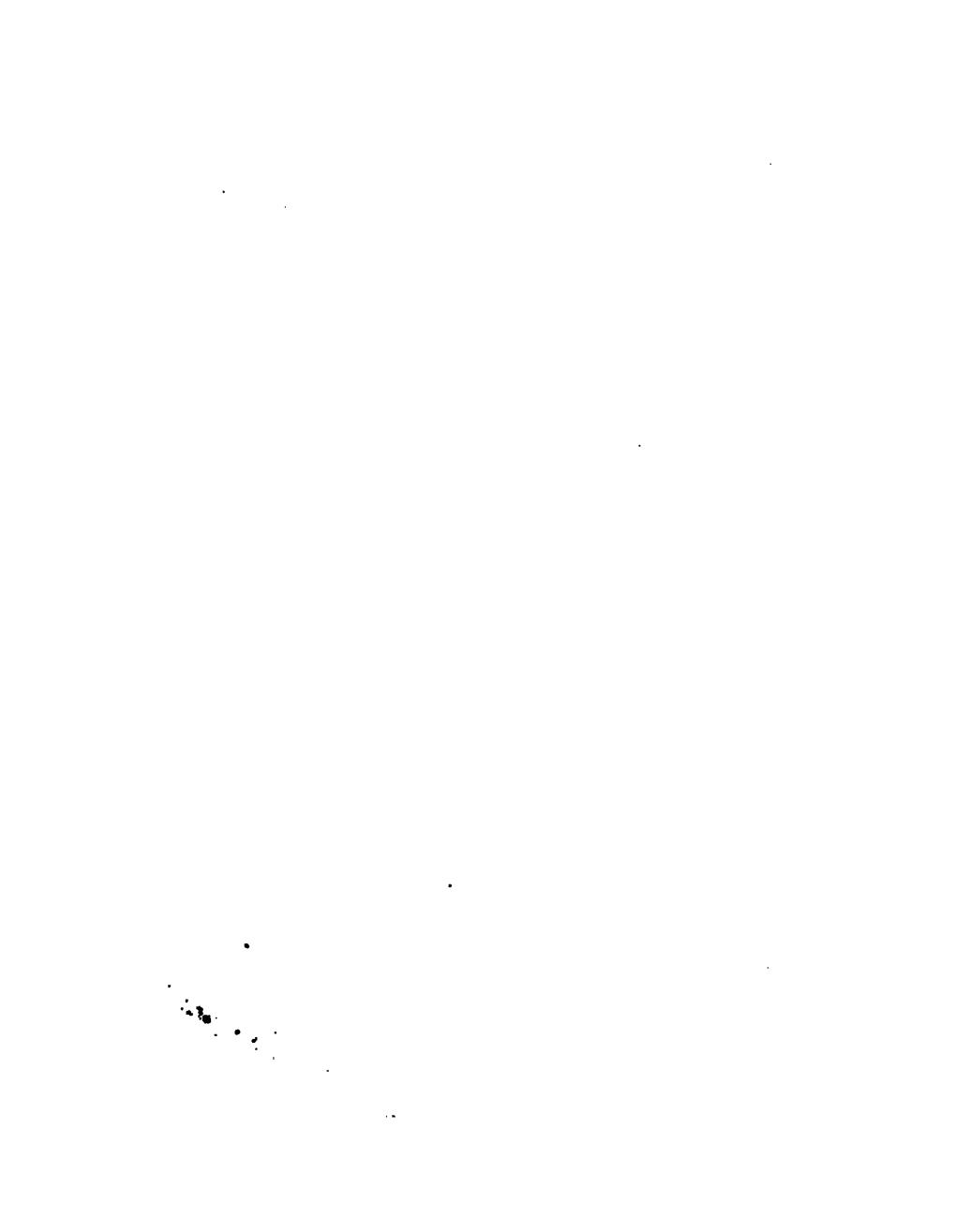
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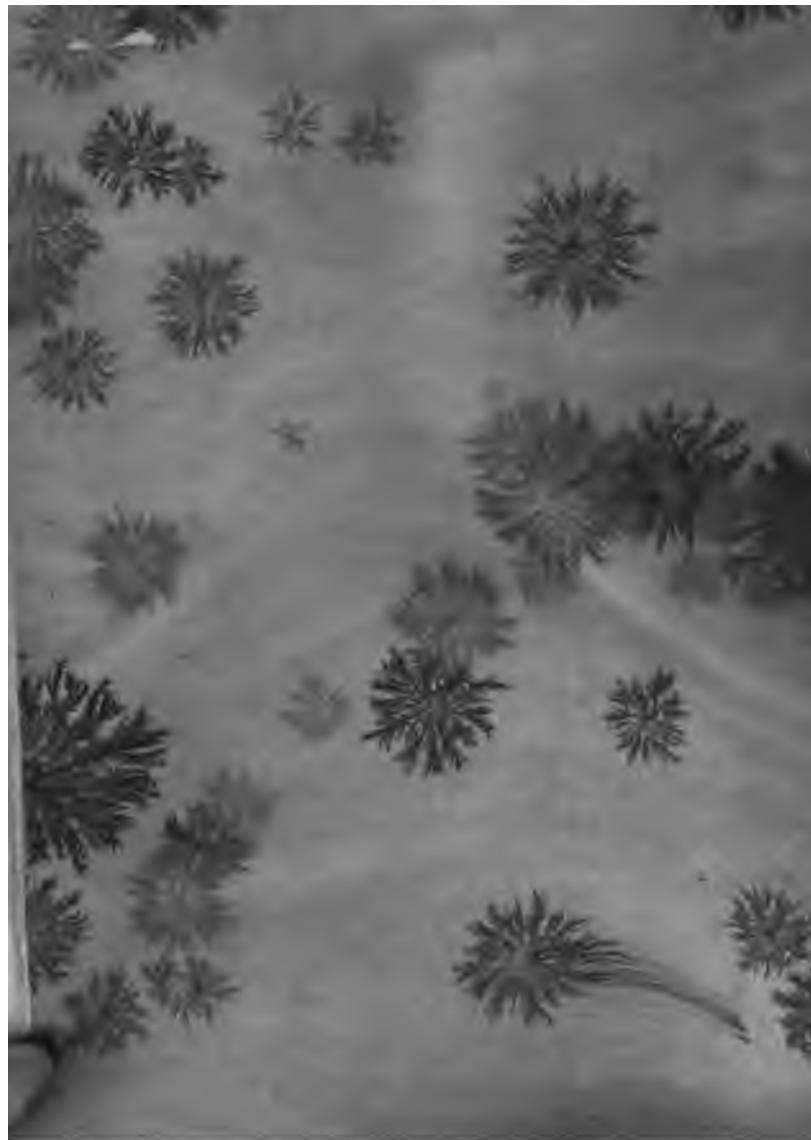
Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,  
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;  
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.  
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden  
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid  
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,  
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants gray,  
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,  
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,  
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day

## XVIII.

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,  
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.  
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,  
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,  
With sadder than the Niobean womb,  
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.  
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;  
There lies not any troublous thing before,  
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,  
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,  
All waters as the shore.

THE END.





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